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THESIS

NAVY SEALS:
THEORY VS. REALITY

by

Brian W. Reeves

December, 1997

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine two books that advance alternate theories to explain the success or failure of special operations. The first book is Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, by Lucien S. Vandenbroucke. Vandenbroucke discusses recurrent problems with U.S. special operations and identifies what he believes are the causes of failure of such operations. The second book is Spec Ops, written by William H. McRaven. McRaven examines eight historic cases from around the globe and develops his theory on how to conduct successful special operations. From the analysis of three recent Navy SEAL special operations missions, both theories seem to provide a useful tool for thinking about the failure or success of special operations. Combining these theories provides a complete framework for senior planners and tacticians in formulating a plan for successfully conducting future special operations missions.

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NAVY SEALS: THEORY VS. REALITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine two books that advance alternate theories to explain the success or failure of special operations. The first book is Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy, by Lucien S. Vandenbroucke. Vandenbroucke discusses recurrent problems with U. S. special operations and identifies what he believes are the causes of failure of such operations. The second book is Spec Ops, written by William H. McRaven. McRaven examines eight historic cases from around the globe and develops his theory on how to conduct successful special operations. From the analysis of three recent Navy SEAL special operations missions, both theories seem to provide a useful tool for thinking about the failure or success of special operations. Combining these theories provides a complete framework for senior planners and tacticians in formulating a plan for successfully conducting future special operations missions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of warfare, small units have repeatedly conducted operations against a larger, defensively positioned enemy. Defying what Carl von Clausewitz, in his book "On War," defines as the superior form of warfare, these smaller forces have regularly succeeded in defeating the defensive enemy. From the rescue of Benito Mussolini, to the Entebbe raid, these operations have successfully been conducted to achieve foreign and defense policy goals. United States forces have conducted several such operations in support of foreign policy objectives. Despite using what many consider to be the most highly trained forces in the world, however, the United States special operations have achieved only limited success. The rescue attempt of the crew of the U.S. freighter Mayaguez, the raid on Son Tay, and the Desert One operation all had lack luster results. The employment of special operations forces is increasingly being sought after by every major Commander in Chief in the U. S. military. As the use and critical nature of special operations increases, their success becomes paramount to U.S. strategic goals. If

a theory exists that explains the success or failure of special operations, then ultimately this theory could determine the success or failure of U.S. strategic policy.

This thesis will examine two books that advance alternate theories to explain the success and failure of special operations. The first book is Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy[1], by Lucien S. Vandenbrouke. Vandenbrouke is a Foreign Service officer at the U.S. Department of State. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Connecticut, as well as advance degrees from Yale University and the University of Paris. Vandenbrouke provides an in-depth analysis of four U.S. special operations. Drawing primarily on declassified documents and interviews, Vandenbrouke offers his views on the way the U.S. plans and executes strategic special operations. Vandenbrouke discusses recurrent problems with U.S. special operations and identifies what he believes are the causes of failure of such operations.

[1] Vandenbroucke, L.S., *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign* Policy, Oxford University Press, Inc, 1993. All references to Vandenbroucke and his views are from this book.

The second book, entitled Spec Ops[2], was written by William H. McRaven. McRaven has been a U.S. Navy SEAL since 1978, and has commanded SEAL Team THREE, based at Coronado, California. He is a graduate of the University of Texas and has received a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School. McRaven examines eight historical cases and provides an analysis of each. These cases involve operations conducted by United States, British, German, Israeli and Italian forces. Through interviews, official reports, and visiting the actual sites where these operations occurred, McRaven develops his theory on how to conduct successful special operations.

Both authors use similar methodological approaches in analyzing special operations. Through archival research and interviews, they formulate their theories. Even though they are similar in this respect, they differ greatly in the number and choice of cases, and maybe most significantly in their purpose for analysis. Vandenbroucke examines the use and misuse of special operations by the United States through an in depth analysis of four operations: the Bay of

[2] McRaven, W.H., *Spec* Ops, Presidio Press, 1995. All references to McRaven and his views are from this book.

Pigs invasion, the Son Tay raid to rescue POWs in North Vietnam, the Mayaquez operation, and the Iran hostage rescue mission. Vandenbroucke views all of these operations as failures and cites their failures as being a result of five common problems. These problems are **faulty intelligence**, **poor interagency and interservice cooperation and coordination**, **inadequate information and advice provided to decision makers**, **wishful thinking** on the part of decision makers, and **micromanagement** from outside the theater of operations.

McRaven approaches the problem from a slightly different angle. His purpose is to identify key elements in conducting successful special operations. To illustrate his point, McRaven examines eight cases that span the entire spectrum of special operations from global conventional war to peacetime engagement. McRaven's cases include the German attack on Eben Emael, the Italian manned torpedo attack at Alexandria, the British raid on Saint-Nazaire, the rescue of Benito Mussolini, the midget submarine attack on the Tirpitz, the U.S. Ranger raid on Cabatuan, the U.S. Army raid on Son Tay, and the Israeli raid on Entebbe. Because Vandenbroucke approaches his analysis from a strategic level

and McRaven approaches his analysis from a tactical level, Vandenbroucke and McRaven both use the Son Tay raid to support their different points of view. While Vandenbrouke sees this operation as a failure because no hostages were recovered, McRaven sees this operation as a success. McRaven's position is that in all of his cases key elements contributed to what he believes allowed these forces to achieve relative superiority over the enemy. He develops six principles of special operations that allow special forces to achieve this superiority. These principles are **simplicity**, **security**, **repetition**, **surprise**, **speed**, and **purpose**.

This thesis will examine both theories in depth. Chapter II will be a discussion and overview of both theories. The result will be a detailed analysis of what these theories have in common and where they differ. Chapter III will be an application of these theories to recent operations. Utilizing case study analysis, as these authors did, these theories will be used to analyze U.S. Naval special operations conducted in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War. This approach will test the relevance of these theories and in doing so validate or invalidate their

application in future Naval special operations. Chapter IV will be a summary discussion of how these theories hold up in these more recent operations. The findings of this thesis will formulate a theory for the successful conduct of future Naval special operations. This theory will provide guidelines in the successful planning and conduct of Naval special operations. Ultimately this theory could be used to govern the successful application of special operations in the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

II. DISCUSSION/OVERVIEW

A. VANDENBROUCKE

Vandenbroucke began writing his book in the early 1980's when, as a graduate student in political science, he noticed what he believed were similar problems with the Iran hostage rescue mission and the Bay of Pigs. His observations led him to question whether the failure of these two operations, as well as similar operations conducted between the Cuban and Iranian missions, was due at least in part to recurrent, systemic problems in the way the United States plans and conducts such operations. His study led him to closely examine U.S. strategic special operations since World War II. His study is limited to only those operations that were conducted after detailed review at the highest levels of the U.S. government and were executed in an attempt to solve major problems of U.S. foreign policy. After eliminating any operations that he felt did not fit this criteria, he narrowed his study to the 1970 U.S. raid to Son Tay in North Vietnam, the 1975 Mayaquez operation, the Bay of Pigs and the Iran hostage rescue mission.

Vandenbroucke classifies all of these missions as strategic special operations missions. He characterizes such missions as operations that sought to achieve major foreign policy aims rather than just tactical objectives. Vandenbroucke contends that all of these missions also had several other characteristics in common. The highest civilian and military authorities in the White House and the Pentagon closely monitored the preparation and execution of these missions. Strategic operations also are usually joint endeavors involving several U.S. military services and civilian government agencies. Such operations are high-risk, and the possible damage to U.S. prestige is considered to be great. In addition, according to Vandenbroucke, all of the missions he examined displayed an additional characteristic, they were all seriously flawed.

Vandenbroucke suggests that this lack luster record does not merely reflect poor luck or the unique circumstances of each operation. Rather, there are recurrent problems as supported by comments by key players in these operations as well as well-informed observers. The first is faulty intelligence. In the Bay of Pigs, Vandenbroucke recounts how the planners told the White House

that Castro's forces were largely demoralized and unlikely to resist effectively an invasion by CIA-backed exiles. In reality, Castro's forces proved to be highly motivated and surprisingly well organized. So much so that they actually drove the invading forces back to sea. Vandenbroucke quotes Richard M. Bissell, the CIA mastermind of the invasion, who argued, in retrospect, a chief cause of failure in the operation was that Castro's forces "moved more decisively, faster and in greater force than anyone had anticipated."

Vandenbroucke cites the raid on Son Tay as another mission characterized by poor intelligence. In this case, U.S. forces successfully raided a POW camp on the outskirts of Hanoi only to discover that the North Vietnamese had moved the prisoners months earlier. U.S. intelligence also had failed to identify a military installation containing enemy troops only minutes from the POW camp. Faulty intelligence also marred the Mayaquez operation. According to Vandenbroucke, the Marines assaulted Koh Tang Island expecting to find only a handful of Cambodian Communist (Khmer Rouge) irregulars. Instead they encountered a well entrenched force of two hundred or more seasoned, regular Khmer Rouge troops.

Vandenbroucke is especially critical of U.S. capabilities in the area of HUMINT, the collection of intelligence by human agents. Although he concedes that the U.S. excels at collecting intelligence through technical means, such as overhead photography and the monitoring of electronic transmissions, poor HUMINT was especially critical to the Bay of Pigs, Son Tay, and the Iran raid. Human intelligence, contends Vandenbroucke, could have provided more accurate information about the real capabilities and motivation of Castro's forces. Accurate HUMINT could have provided information telling whether any POWs were still being held at Son Tay. In the Iran operation, U.S. intelligence did not know where in the large compound hostages were being held. Not until they debriefed a Pakistani cook who had worked there did they know for sure. The information he provided, however, did not reach the rescuers until the eve of the mission, almost too late.

Vandenbroucke's second reason for failure in strategic special operations is insufficient coordination and cooperation between the services and agencies involved. He contends that a major criticism of the Iran hostage rescue mission is that it was attempted by an ad hoc force of

different units from the four services and failed to perform as a cohesive team. Supporting this contention, Vandenbroucke quotes Colonel Charles A. Beckwith, commander of the Army's Delta Force team that was supposed to free the American hostages at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, as saying "In Iran we had an ad hoc affair. We went out, found bits and pieces, people and equipment, brought them together occasionally and then asked them to perform a highly complex mission. The parts all performed, but they didn't necessarily perform as a team. Nor did they have the same motivation."

The problem with coordination and cooperation is also supported in Vandenbroucke's account of other operations as well. There were bitter discussions by military commanders who participated in the Bay of Pigs, concerning their CIA counterparts. Marines who participated in the Mayaquez operation are cited as complaining about the close air support they received from the Air Force. Certainly this same concern was observed by many for several decades. Vandenbrouke notes that the 1987 creation of a unified special operations command, the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), may help to solve this problem. He in

fact has high praise for USSOCOM operations in Grenada and the Gulf War. Whether this same success is now a characteristic of strategic special operations remains to be seen.

Another recurrent problem discussed by Vandenbroucke is that the senior decision makers who evaluate and approve these operations often receive poor information and advice. Several occurrences are used to support this theory. President Kennedy was apparently very upset about the advice he received concerning the Bay of Pigs. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, a member of the secret White House board that conducted the investigation and evaluated the operation had strong words describing the JCS's failure to properly study the plan. Robert F. Kennedy is quoted as saying "disgraceful...They really didn't give it the attention that was necessary and study that was essential and didn't analyze the facts." In regards to the Son Tay raid, White House Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry A. Kissinger was critical of the advice given to him by the military. Kissinger asserts, "none of the briefings that led to the decision to proceed had ever mentioned the possibility that the camp might be empty." This despite

other reports that the military had intelligence that supported this possibility.

Because of the relatively low cost of strategic special operations in terms of manpower and logistics, Vandenbroucke sees another recurrent problem with the U.S. use of such forces. Decision makers can become overly attracted and reliant on strategic special operations, so much so that they often engage in wishful thinking. This practice, asserts Vandenbroucke, often leads to over reliance and a kind of misperception of the reality of what strategic special operations can hope to accomplish. Richard M. Bissell, the main CIA planner for the Cuban invasion, wrote that the planners had engaged in wishful thinking about the scheme. Beckwith, the former commander of Delta Force, wrote in his book on the Iran hostage rescue mission, that he had misgivings about the helicopter crews. Despite these misgivings, Vandenbroucke writes that Beckwith wished the problem away. Beckwith wrote, "On the other hand, everyone wanted to have confidence in these leathernecks. If not them, who? If not now, when? The Marines got the benefit of the doubt."

Vandenbroucke's last reason for failure is that senior military or civilian officials far from the theater of operations often exercise excessive control over the mission execution. Vandenbroucke cites several examples of this recurrence in the missions he examines. During the Bay of Pigs, Navy leaders are reported as being shocked about the way the White House directed tactical decisions such as ship placements and the canceling of a key D-Day air strike, seriously weakening the invasion plan. During the Mayaquez operation, the Commander in Chief of U.S. forces in the Pacific (CINCPAC), located thousands of miles from the scene, tried to direct the movements of individual planes and forces on or near the island of Koh Tang, where the hostages were thought to be kept. Vandenbroucke is especially critical in Kennedy's intervention in the Bay of Pigs. He states that the president may rightfully intervene in an ongoing operation if he perceives that U.S. political interests require it. His criticism is that Kennedy did not consult either the CIA or military before interfering. As Vandenbroucke sees it, the White House or senior military leaders should intervene in strategic special operations under way only to make changes required by high level U.S.

political interests or by an altered military situation of which the forces may not be aware. Vandenbroucke warns that interference from senior officials may become even more of a temptation as advances are made in modern communications.

In summary, Vandenbroucke makes the case for recurrent problems that have plagued strategic special operations. He argues that the two most common flaws in these operations are poor coordination and poor information being provided to the White House. He sees poor coordination as the most serious problem with the Iran raid and also a major problem with the Bay of Pigs and the Mayaquez operation. Poor information being provided to the White House was the largest shortcoming of the Bay of Pigs, a weakness of the Iran mission, and a problem in the Mayaquez operation. Poor intelligence was the major flaw of the Son Tay operation, and a hindrance in the Bay of Pigs and the Iran mission. Wishful thinking is seen as the worst flaw of the Mayaquez operation, and a contributor to the Bay of Pigs mission and the Iranian mission. Inappropriate intervention was displayed in the Bay of Pigs and the Mayaquez operation. Vandenbroucke does concede that the Son Tay raid came the

closest to success and displayed the fewest of these recurrent problems.

The last portion of Vandenbroucke's book is devoted to his views on how to solve these problems. He gives great credit to recent efforts to address some of these issues. Most notably he has high praise for the establishment and functioning of USSOCOM. He gives credit to USSOCOM for conducting successful missions during both the Panama invasion and the Gulf War. During these two conflicts he was especially impressed with what he says was excellent coordination among special operations forces and between these forces and conventional forces. According to Vandenbroucke, recent efforts for reform of U.S. special operations forces have created a much more dependable force. In closing, Vandenbroucke writes of his concern that special operations forces continue to make progress, and that the United States should be especially careful to understand and use special operations forces only as they should be used.

B. MCRAVEN

McRaven's analysis of special operations approaches the question from a slightly different angle. His approach is to identify key elements at a tactical level that can

contribute to the successful conduct of special operations. McRaven notes that among the large library of military doctrine there are none that contain a theory of special operations. His interest in special operations is self evident in that he himself has been a special operator since 1978. He believes that there are six principles of special operations that if used by special operations forces can reduce Clausewitz's frictions of war to manageable levels. McRaven's six principles are simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose as derived from his eight cases. His ultimate conclusion is that by utilizing his principles, special operations can achieve relative superiority over an enemy.

McRaven writes that even though achieving this relative superiority does not guarantee success, it is necessary for success. His stated objective is to develop a theory for the successful conduct of special operations to provide an intellectual framework for thinking about special operations. As Vandenbroucke narrowed the scope of his analysis to what he considers to be U.S. strategic special operations, McRaven narrows his scope as well. McRaven defines a special operation as follows: "A special operation

is conducted by forces specially trained, equipped, and supported for a specific target whose destruction, elimination, or rescue (in the case of hostages), is a political or military imperative." His definition is very similar to what Joint Pub 3-05 defines as a direct action mission. McRaven's eight cases, however, were always of a strategic or operational nature and had the advantage of virtually unlimited resources and national level intelligence as did Vandenbroucke's.

Understanding the concept of relative superiority is important in understanding McRaven's theory. He defines relative superiority as a condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over the larger or well defended enemy. He supports his view by further defining three characteristics of relative superiority that he believes reveal themselves in his analysis.

McRaven writes that first, relative superiority is achieved in the pivotal moment in an engagement. He states that in World War II, during the German attack on Eben Emael, they achieved relative superiority in the first few moments of the mission by using gliders and special shaped

charges to gain surprise and speed to overpower the enemy. During Operation Chariot, the British achieved relative superiority over the Germans at a dry dock at Saint-Nazaire, France. The British modified an old destroyer and filled it with four and a quarter tons of explosives, covered it with armored plating, sailed it across the English Channel, and rammed it into the German held dry dock. Once the ship reached the outer harbor two miles form the dry dock the Germans could not stop it. At this point, contends McRaven, relative superiority was achieved.

The second characteristic of relative superiority discussed by McRaven is that once relative superiority is achieved, it must be sustained in order to guarantee success. He cites the rescue of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in support of this view. During this mission, SS Captain Otto Skorzeny conducted a glider assault on an Italian position on top of a peak in the Apennines Mountains. He achieved relative superiority when he successfully stormed the position and had Mussolini in custody. To complete the mission, however, he still had to get Mussolini from the peak and back to Rome. This time period required that he sustain this relative superiority.

According to McRaven, this was accomplished through boldness on Skorzeny's part and by reinforcements by conventional forces.

McRaven goes on to assert that often the ability to sustain relative superiority by special operations forces is often a result of courage, intellect, boldness, and perseverance. For example, Lt. Luigi Durand, an Italian frogman, was able to clandestinely enter an enemy harbor aboard a manned torpedo in order to place explosives under the British battleship H.M.S. Valiant. After successfully circumventing numerous obstacles such as nets, depth charges, and security forces, he and his team mate encountered problems that they had not counted on. The torpedo lost ballast as they were diving under their target, and sunk into the mud. In addition, his partner lost consciousness and floated to the surface. Ignoring his own extreme exhaustion and freezing temperatures, Durand single handedly moved the torpedo into position under the ship. Through his own tremendous perseverance and courage he was able to sustain relative superiority and turn a potentially failed mission into a successful one.

This brings us to McRaven's last characteristic of relative superiority. According to McRaven, if relative superiority is lost, it is difficult to regain. To illustrate, McRaven recounts the problems British commandos aboard the H.M.S. Cambeltown encountered after they successfully rammed the dry dock at Saint-Nazaire. The mission called for the commandos to disembark and destroy various targets in the port facility. Although they initially gained relative superiority they lost it when German reinforcements overwhelmed them and eventually forced them to surrender. This, according to McRaven, is typical of an inherent weakness in special operations forces in that they often have a lack of firepower relative to larger conventional forces. This disadvantage is why special operations forces must gain the initiative in order to gain relative superiority. McRaven additionally comments that the key to a special operations mission is to gain relative superiority early in the engagement. The longer the engagement, the less likely for special operations success. This relative superiority, asserts McRaven, can be effected through the use of his six principles.

McRaven's six principles; **simplicity**, **security**, **repetition**, **surprise**, **speed** and **purpose**, are all derived through his analysis of the eight historical cases he studied. In each case, if one of these principles was not adhered to, there was some degree of failure. From this observation McRaven developed his theory of how to conduct successful special operations. It is his position that it is these six principles, that if taken into account during the planning, preparation and execution of a mission, allow special operations forces to achieve relative superiority over the enemy, and thus greatly increase their chances for success.

McRaven's first principle is **simplicity**. It is this principle that he considers the most crucial and yet often overlooked. According to McRaven there are three elements of simplicity: limiting the number of objectives, good intelligence, and innovation. The first element of simplicity is limiting the number of tactical objectives to only those that are vital to accomplishing the strategic or operational objectives of the mission. To demonstrate his point, McRaven cites the events that happened at Eben Emael as a good example. During this mission, Hitler had given

orders for German commandos to seize the fort at Eben Emael to prevent the fort's big guns from preventing the advance of German tanks. Although there were nineteen possible targets they limited their objective to only nine that were seen as the greatest threat. With only nine targets, the German commandos were able to successfully complete their mission.

Another example given demonstrates the problems that arise when too many objectives are targeted. While planning for the raid on Saint-Nazaire, the British named the Normandy dry dock, the South Lock gates and any accessible U-boats as the primary targets. As planning progressed, however, the number of targets went from three to eleven. This complicated the plan in that they had to add fifty more soldiers and over two hundred naval support personnel to the assault force. Because of this change more training was required, and tactics had to be changed. This increase in targets forced changing a simple plan with few moving parts to a complicated plan that increased the number of personnel and time on target.

McRaven writes that good intelligence is the second element in developing a simple plan. With good

intelligence, planners can limit the number of forces to only what is necessary. During the rescue mission at the Entebbe Airport, the Israelis had good intelligence on the number of Ugandan guards, and their weaponry. This allowed Brig. Gen. Dan Shomron to reduce the size of his force. This allowed for greater command and control and was a key element to their success. The Germans utilized good intelligence to raid the fort at Eben Emael. The Germans were able to obtain detailed plans of the fortress showing the emergency exists. The Germans used this information to block the exits so that none of the Belgians inside the fort could escape and overwhelm the small German force.

Although McRaven writes about the importance of good intelligence, he places emphasis on planners' ability to use their judgment as well. Because intelligence is often wrong or contradictory, planners must plan what is most probable. During the midget submarine attack against the German battle ship Tirpitz, the submarine crew did not know how far the net protecting the ship went below the water. They planned, therefore, to be able to cut the net even if it extended to the sea bottom 120 feet below. The raiders in the Son Tay rescue mission did not know how many prisoners and guards

there were. They planned, therefore, for a number that was derived from projections based on the number and size of the buildings in the camp. In each case planners filled in the gaps in intelligence with what was most reasonable to expect.

McRaven's third element in simplicity is innovation. McRaven sees innovation as key to overcoming obstacles that might slow a mission down or complicate the plan. Innovation was used by the Germans with their use of gliders to attack Fort Eban Emael. Although gliders had never been used in combat before, the innovative use of these gliders allowed the Germans to surprise the Belgians. This element of surprise allowed the Germans to complete their mission to destroy the guns threatening the advance of German conventional forces. To improve shooting accuracy of Army Special Forces personnel during the Son Tay mission, they used an innovative new low light scope. This scope improved shooting accuracy by 60 percent and was crucial to the success of the mission.

In all of these cases simplicity was achieved with either good intelligence or innovation. McRaven emphasizes that his examples of simplicity are most evident during the

execution phase of a mission, but they must be considered during the planning phase as well. If a plan is simple it will have a greater chance to succeed.

McRaven's second principle is **security**. By security McRaven is referring to the means by which specifics of a mission are kept secret from the enemy. McRaven feels that it is not so much that an operation is going to occur that must be kept secure, but more the timing and means of insertion that must be kept secure from the enemy. Security is important because it prevents the enemy from gaining an advantage. McRaven observes that in almost all of the cases he studied the enemy was prepared for the types of attacks that occurred. What they were not prepared for was the time and method. Whether it was an insertion by mini submarine or glider, tight security kept the enemy ignorant as to the specifics of the mission. In each case security contributed to surprise by the assaulting force. This in turn contributed to success. McRaven emphasizes that security that is tight but does not interfere with the mission allows special operations forces to achieve relative superiority. Relative superiority is achieved because it prevents the enemy from gaining an unexpected advantage that might allow

the enemy to prepare a surprise of their own to impede the mission.

McRaven's third principle is **repetition**. Repetition during the preparation phase of a mission is seen by McRaven as being indispensable in eliminating mistakes to achieve success. He says that at least one, and preferably two full dress rehearsals prior to the mission are essential to hone tactical skills and test any new tactics or equipment innovated for the mission. For example, he attributes the success of the air force task group involved in the Son Tay raid to repetition. During this raid they were required to fly extremely tight formations with the UH-1H and the C-130 aircraft. This formation was only possible after hundreds of hours of practice. During the operation to attack the German battle ship Tirpitz, rehearsals were not used to practice towing the small dry submersibles by conventional submarines. On the actual towing, the manila towline broke and one mini submarine sunk and another was damaged. Admiral Godfrey Place is quoted as saying, "If only we had towed the boats for the full eight days we might have known that the manila lines would break." McRaven makes the point

that repetition hones both individual and unit skills, while full dress rehearsals uncover any weaknesses in a plan.

McRaven's fourth principle is **surprise**. As has been mentioned before, McRaven points out that special forces often do not have the luxury to attack an enemy when and where he is unprepared. Therefore special operations forces must use surprise not to catch an enemy unprepared, but off guard. McRaven writes that surprise by special operations forces is accomplished through deception, timing, and taking advantage of the enemy's vulnerabilities. During the raid on Son Tay, the navy's Carrier task Force 77 conducted a diversionary strike to divert attention away from the raid. This diversion is credited with allowing the heliborne raid force to penetrate North Vietnam's air defense and land undetected in the POW camp. In most special operations deception is best used to delay action by the enemy. McRaven uses the Entebbe raid as an example. He writes that when the Israelis assaulted the Entebbe Airport, they used a Mercedes sedan similar to ones used by Ugandan dignitaries to momentarily delay action by the Ugandan guards. Skorzeny took an Italian general with him when he rescued Mussolini. McRaven quotes Skorzeny as saying that the Italian general's

"mere presence would probably serve to create certain confusion...a sort of hesitation which would prevent them form resisting immediately or from assassinating the Duce." In this case the deception did cause confusion among the guards and gave Skorzeny enough time to reach Mussolini.

McRaven states that the time of attack is another key to gaining surprise. Contrary to conventional thought, the best time to attack may not always be at night. McRaven points this out in recounting several special operations missions that achieved a great deal of surprise despite being carried out during daylight hours. Skorzeny landed at 1400. His intent was to time this landing with the guards just finishing lunch. He believed they would be less alert at this time. The midget submarine that destroyed the Tirpitz attacked in the morning. This time was chosen to coincide with British intelligence reports that said that the Tirpitz radar would be down for repairs at this time.

McRaven closes his discussion of surprise by warning tacticians to not place all of their emphasis on surprise. McRaven makes the point that surprise is useless and unachievable without his other principles. He says that surprise is essential, but not the only answer. In order to

achieve relative superiority all principles must be considered and applied properly.

McRaven's fifth principle is **speed**. McRaven's view of speed as it relates to special operations is simple. He states in special operations the concept of speed means to get to your objective as fast as possible. This principle is important because it limits vulnerability and thus increases opportunity to achieve relative superiority. McRaven believes that over time the frictions of war work only against the special operations forces and not against the defensive enemy.

McRaven cites his two case studies involving submarine attacks to demonstrate his point. During the Tirpitz attack many problems began to arise as time progressed. During the transit across the North Atlantic, the mini submarine began to have electrical and ballast problems. Because time was so critical the submarine commander, Lt. Don Cameron, decided not to use his planned and more clandestine route to the target, but chose instead to surface and make a mad dash to the Tirpitz. In this case, the submarine commander was clearly more concerned with time than even the possibility of being seen by the enemy.

During the Italian attack at Alexandria, time was of greater concern than the enemy as well. Because the divers who operated the Italian torpedo were exposed to such extreme conditions of cold, they knew that they had to limit their exposure. Because Durand de la Penne worked quickly to place his explosives before the effects of the cold overcame him, he was able to achieve success. McRaven states that in both of these cases, the enemy was not a factor, but time was still an obstacle to the success of the mission.

To further make his point, McRaven writes that of the successful missions that he analyzed, only the Saint-Nazaire raid took longer than thirty minutes to achieve relative superiority. In most of his cases relative superiority was achieved in five minutes and the missions lasted only thirty minutes. McRaven's position is that because special operations forces are generally lightly armed in order to gain surprise and speed, they are unable to successfully continue sustained engagements with the enemy. During the attack at Saint-Nazaire when the targets increased from three to eleven, this required the commandos to be ashore longer. This in turn directly impacted their time of

vulnerability, and in turn contributed to mission failure. McRaven believes that relative superiority can be gained primarily because an attacking special operations force moves with such speed that the enemy's reaction is not an overriding factor.

McRaven's last principle is **purpose**. McRaven defines purpose as understanding and then executing the prime objective of the mission regardless of emerging obstacles or opportunities. McRaven gives two aspects of this principle. First, the purpose must be clearly defined in the mission statement. Care must be given to state the mission so that even in the heat of battle all individuals understand what the primary objective is. During the Tirpitz attack, the submarine commander's mission statement said that if his craft was still under power and equipped with at least one side charge, then he was to attack. Despite numerous other problems with the submarine, his craft still had the required operational capabilities and he thus carried out his objective. During the assault on the British fleet in Alexandria, two of the Italian frogmen found themselves under the wrong enemy vessel. Although destroying the ship would have been acceptable, they further risked their lives

to continue on to the proper target. It is McRaven's contention that in both of these cases the men had clearly defined orders that directed their actions in the heat of battle and focused their efforts on what was important.

The second aspect of purpose is personal commitment. McRaven quotes General Joshua Shani the air commander at Entebbe as saying after the raid, "We were absolutely committed to seeing the task completed..." Captain Skorzeny is quoted as saying, "When a man is moved by pure enthusiasm and by the conviction that he is risking his life in a noble cause...he provides the essential element for success." McRaven warns that in an age of high technology and Jedi Knights we often overlook the need for personal involvement, but we do so at our own risk.

McRaven concludes his book by stating his position that his theory explains why special operations succeed. His theory supports his belief that special operations forces are able to achieve relative superiority over the enemy if they prepare a simple plan, which is carefully concealed, repeatedly and realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose. McRaven concedes that his theory of relative superiority does not guarantee success,

but boldly concludes that no special operation can succeed without it. His six principles support his view that relative superiority can and should be achieved quickly and that the mission must be one such that the forces limit their time of vulnerability. This vulnerability, being related to relative superiority, is a function of simplicity (innovation and intelligence), security, and surprise. He writes that time is a function of speed; and mission completion is related to limiting the objectives and motivating the soldiers.

In summary, McRaven states that what allows special operations to succeed is their ability to effectively use his principles of special operations. The better his principles are integrated the greater the relative superiority. By using his principles, forces can also reduce their vulnerability. McRaven believes it is this combination of gaining relative superiority while reducing vulnerability, that can be achieved through his six principles. These principles, according to McRaven, explain why special operations can succeed.

C. COMPARISON

A direct comparison of these two theories yields very little contradictions and many similarities. Of course the questions that each were trying to answer seem very different on the surface, but are actually complementary. While Vandenbroucke seeks to explain why U.S. special operations fail, one can use this information to in fact tell how special operations can succeed. If Vandenbroucke's reasons for failure are known up front and compensated for in the planning end execution of an operation, then it follows that this theory could be used to explain how special operations can succeed. How special operations succeed in turn was the purpose of McRaven's analysis. Using this line of reasoning one would expect that both theories should have much in common.

Indeed these theories do have much in common. The differences are really only ones of terminology and different levels of analysis. Vandenbroucke examines his cases more from the strategic level of a planner and authorizing official. McRaven examines his cases from a tactical level of planner and executor. Many of their ideas overlap. While Vandenbroucke cites an intelligence failure,

especially in the areas of HUMINT, as a reason for failure, McRaven states that his principle of simplicity is a function of good intelligence. In fact, in McRaven's examples of the Israeli rescue operation and the midget submarine attack on the Tirpitz, information such as weapon types and disposition of guards as in the Israeli case, and maintenance schedules as in the Tirpitz case, could only be gained through HUMINT. So one can conclude that the HUMINT capabilities in McRaven's cases were significant to their success, thus also supporting Vandenbroucke's theory.

Similarly, through the use of McRaven's principles of simplicity, and repetition , many of Vandenbrouckes problems of coordination are supported. McRaven states that simplicity reduces the problems associated with coordination. Also, Vandenbroucke himself makes the case for repetition and rehearsals when he acknowledges that in the Son Tay raid many of the problems of coordination were solved through the many rehearsals conducted.

Vandenbroucke also makes the case for a few other of McRaven's principles in reference to generalities about special operations. Vandenbroucke says that strategic special operators must prevail through speed, shock,

surprise, and superior skill. Two of McRaven's principles; speed and surprise are mentioned verbatim.

Vandenbroucke additionally states that excessive secrecy impedes coordination in special operations. McRaven has similar thoughts as he also warns that although he supports the principle of security, it must not be enforced to the detriment of the operation. Additionally, Vandenbroucke states that with the inception of USSOCOM, many of his problems appear to be solved. Poor coordination, according to Vandenbroucke, were in fact not a problem in operation Just Cause in Panama and in the Gulf War. Both testament to USSOCOM's positive influence.

Vandenbroucke's ideas of inadequate advice to decision makers, wishful thinking by decision makers, and micromanegement of the execution of special operations missions all can be resolved through McRaven's principle of purpose given by these decision makers through a clear mission statement. USSOCOM can then step in to advise decision makers accurately as to the capabilities and options for the use of special operations.

In conclusion, the theories brought forward by Vandenbroucke and McRaven appear to be very similar. They

often use many of the same general ideas to support their theories. Combined, these theories appear to complement and support each other. On the surface these theories would seem to provide a comprehensive guide to all participants in a special operation. Vandenbroucke as a guide primarily to decision makers and planners, and McRaven as a guide to planners and operators. If these theories are right, combined they may provide a comprehensive, top down guide in all levels of special operations from granting authorization to planning and execution. The next question is to see how these theories hold up in more recent special operations missions.

III. CASE STUDIES

A. OVERVIEW

To test these theories, three recent Navy SEAL Special Operations missions will be examined. Operations conducted in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War will be analyzed. These operations were chosen primarily because they were conducted after the missions that Vandenbroucke and McRaven examined. As the military in general has undergone many changes over the years, it may be that so have special operations. Examining more recent operations is the one way to test the relevance of these theories for future operations.

Each analysis will begin with background information to demonstrate the process that brought about the involvement of SEALs in these operations. The cases will then be divided into four sections. The first section will provide the details of the preparation phase of each mission. The second section will be an assessment of that phase in terms of Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories. Specifically, Vandenbroucke's elements of poor intelligence, poor cooperation and coordination, inadequate advice and

information to decision makers, wishful thinking, and micromanagement from outside the theater will be examined as they apply to this phase. Similarly, McRaven's elements of simplicity, security, repetition, surprise, speed, and purpose will be applied to determine their relevance to the preparation phase of that mission. The third section will be the execution phase followed by the fourth section which will be further analysis in terms of Vandenbroucke and McRaven.

The objective is to test Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories against the case evidence to determine the outcome of these missions. Additionally, any elements not included in these theories, but having significance to the outcome of the mission, should be revealed. The end result will be a comprehensive theory that can be applied to the preparation and execution of future special operations missions.

B. GRENADA: OPERATION URGENT FURY[3]

1. Backround

The small island of Grenada was under British rule until given its independence in 1974. Sir Eric Gairy was

[3] Unless otherwise noted, information pertaining to this mission was drawn primarily from Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned from operation URGENT FURY.

installed as the island's first prime minister. Sir Gairy's rule was characterized by corruption and the use of strong arm tactics to enforce his political position over potential opponents. In March 1979, Maurice Bishop, a political rival of Gairy, overthrew the tyrannical government in a bloodless coup. After taking his place as the new leader and installing himself as the head of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of Grenada, Bishop soon turned to Cuba to help solve his country's financial problems. Bishop formed a new political party and named it the New Jewel Movement, Jewel being an acronym standing for Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation. Grenada's growing involvement with Cuba and the Soviet Union over the next four years brought Grenada into conflict with the United States' interests in the area. An ambitious construction project to build a nine thousand foot runway on Grenada was begun in 1979. Built primarily by Cuban workers, the stated purpose of the airport was to increase tourism. The United States suspected that the runway was not purely commercial in nature and in fact had military implications. Later, captured documents showed that Cuba did indeed intend to use the runway as a staging area for

shipping troops to Africa as well as a refueling stop for Soviet aircraft going to Nicaragua.

Most of the aid that Grenada received from Cuba went to Grenada's military. As a result, Grenada's People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (PRAF) outnumbered the military forces of all the other eastern Caribbean nations combined by 1983. Bishop, disappointed with the economic assistance he was already receiving, wanted to turn to the Western governments to solicit even more assistance for his country. This was in direct conflict with the wishes of his Deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Coard. Coard led a faction of the New Jewel movement that demanded a faster conversion of Grenada in to a true Marxist state. On October 13, 1983, Coard, with the backing of the military, ordered Bishop out of office and had him placed under arrest by the authority of Coard's People's Revolutionary Army (PRA).

The occurrences on Grenada seriously concerned the U.S. government. In reaction to this concern, on October 13, 1983, an interagency group meeting at the State Department was held to discuss the situation. Of primary concern was protecting the lives of some one thousand American citizens living and working on Grenada, the majority of whom were

students or faculty at the Saint George's University Medical School. On October 14, the National Security Council ordered the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to plan a nonpermissive evacuation of all U.S. citizens on Grenada. Since Grenada is an island, the JCS ordered Admiral Wesley McDonald, Commander in Chief Atlantic (CINCLANT) to draft the required proposal.

On October 18 two naval task forces left the United States for their assignments in the Mediterranean. The first was Task Force 124, containing the helicopter carrier Guam, and the Amphibious Squadron 4 (PHIBRON FOUR), consisting of four landing ships. PHIBRON FOUR carried 1,700 combat ready marines of the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU). Task Force 124 was going to Beirut, Lebanon, to relieve the 24th MAU. Also leaving for its deployment to the Mediterranean was the Independence Carrier Battle Group made up of the aircraft carrier Independence and her escort of cruisers and destroyers.

On October 19, Grenadan Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman returned to Grenada from a visit to the United Nations. After arriving in Grenada, Whiteman began gathering supporters of Bishop in hopes of affecting his

release. Supporters began gathering in the streets to listen to Whiteman's pleas. As the crowd grew they decided to go to where Bishop was being held and obtain his release themselves. Faced with the large crowd of demonstrators, the few guards standing watch over Bishop gave way and Bishop was released to welcome his crowd of supporters that had by this time grown to thousands. Returning to Saint George's, Bishop moved on toward Fort Rupert, where he and his supporters forced their way inside. As Bishop was greeting several of his ministers who had been held at the fort, three armored personnel carriers containing PRA soldiers arrived. The officer in charge of the troops ordered them to open fire into the crowd, hitting over one hundred Grenadians and killing more than fifty. Afterwards, Bishop, four of his ministers, and three of his most prominent supporters were taken into the interior court at Fort Rupert and shot.

The nearest U.S. diplomatic post to Grenada was at Bridgetown in Barbados. The American counsel stationed there, Ambassador Bish, contacted the State Department immediately upon hearing of the events on Grenada. Bish stated that the situation was serious and that there

"appeared to be imminent danger to U.S. citizens resident on Grenada." Bish recommended an emergency evacuation of all U.S. citizens from Grenada.

On the evening of October 19, the JCS sent a warning order to CINCLANT to prepare for a noncombatant evacuation of Grenada. A request was also sent to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) to prepare a contingency plan for the evacuation of Grenada by Special Forces. Both groups were to present their plans to the JCS the next morning. Because of conflicting intelligence on the size and disposition of opposing forces on Grenada the two plans varied greatly. JSOC, basing its plan on the assumption that there were only 250 Cubans and 300 Grenadians under arms proposed to conduct the evacuation using only Special Forces. CINCLANT's plan, based on a larger assessment of the opposition forces proposed using only Marines in an amphibious landing. After much heated debate the final plan was for a compromise operation. In the initial assault the Rangers and Special Forces would take the southern half of the island and the Marines would take the northern half.

The JCS decided that the operation would be commanded by the Navy. U.S. Atlantic Command in Norfolk, Virginia,

was ordered to set up a command group immediately with CINCLANT having overall command of the operation. Once the decision was made to go ahead with the operation and produce detailed plans, JCS ordered that complete operational security (OPSEC) be maintained at all levels. This strict order, or rather the way it was implemented, was later blamed for what has been described as inadequate planning. The Independence Carrier Battle Group and Task Force 124 received orders at 0300 on October 21 to steam to a position just off the coast of Grenada and await further orders. If no further orders were received by October 24, the units were to continue on to their original assignments. No further information was given and the forces had no specifics on what awaited them.

On October 22, two State Department officials went to Grenada to assess the situation. What they saw supported what was reported by Ambassador Bish. The next day the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States met and decided to ask the United States for aid in restoring order on Grenada. On October 24, Tom Adams, the Prime Minister of Barbados, reported being contacted by Governor General Sir Paul Scoon. Scoon had been personally appointed as the representative of

Queen Elizabeth on Grenada in 1978. Most Grenadians still considered Queen Elizabeth to be the official head of state. Scoon had been tolerated as a figure head by Bishop's government. When Coard came into power, Scoon was virtually imprisoned at the Government House, the Governor's mansion at Saint George. Scoon had contacted Adams by sending a written request for help in restoring order and for protection for himself and his staff. Since the United States did not recognize Coard's Revolutionary Military Council as the true government of Grenada, they considered Scoon's request as an official request for U.S. aid.

2. Preparatory Phase

Plans for invading Grenada had already been formulated by CINCLANT, and JSOC had been directed to develop plans that involved both Delta Force and Navy SEALs. Adding to the planning difficulty was the lack of current intelligence. Even though there were hundreds of U.S. citizens already on Grenada, there was not one CIA agent on the island who could be used as a HUMINT source[4]. The operation was, for the most part, planned by CINCLANT over

[4] Vandenbroucke, L.S., *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy,* p. 170, Oxford University Press, 1993.

an extended weekend and based on fairly general guidance provided by the JCS. It was executed, with minimum further planning, two days later by a hastily assembled Joint Task Force (JTF) which had little or no advance warning or opportunity for coordination prior to H-Hour. The plan called for the use of elements from SEAL Teams 4 and 6, Delta Force, the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions, 82nd Airborne Division, the 1st Special Operations Wing of the Air Force, and the 22nd MAU. This diverse force was especially significant because it represented the first time all four services would be operating together since the Vietnam War.

The invasion was given the code name Operation URGENT FURY and placed under the command of Vice Admiral Metcalf. There were five principle missions assigned to Special Forces:

1. A Delta element would parachute in before dawn and secure the airfield at Port Salines. Delta would clear the runway and provide security for the Rangers.

2. Another Delta element would attack the Richmond Hill prison and free the civil servants and other citizens being held there.

3. A SEAL element from SEAL Team 6 would rescue Governor General Paul Scoon and his staff and evacuate them from the island.

4. A platoon from SEAL Team 4 would capture the Radio Free Grenada station and keep it off the air until it could be used by U.S. forces.

5. Another platoon from SEAL Team 4 would insert an Air Force Combat Control Team (CCT) at the Port Salines area.

Although there were continuing changes to the forces assigned to these tasks, the primary SEAL mission was the rescue of Governor General Sir Paul Scoon and his staff. Since the U.S. considered him to be the legitimate government authority, his rescue was seen as being of extreme importance. The map on the following page shows the location of the Governor General's house in relation to the rest of the island. Originally a platoon from SEAL Team 4 and a Marine Recon Platoon were tasked with the mission. The plan involving these forces included using the Marines with LAAW rockets supplied by the SEALs to act as a blocking force around the governor's mansion. The SEALs, equipped with 40mm high explosive ordnance for their M-203 grenade

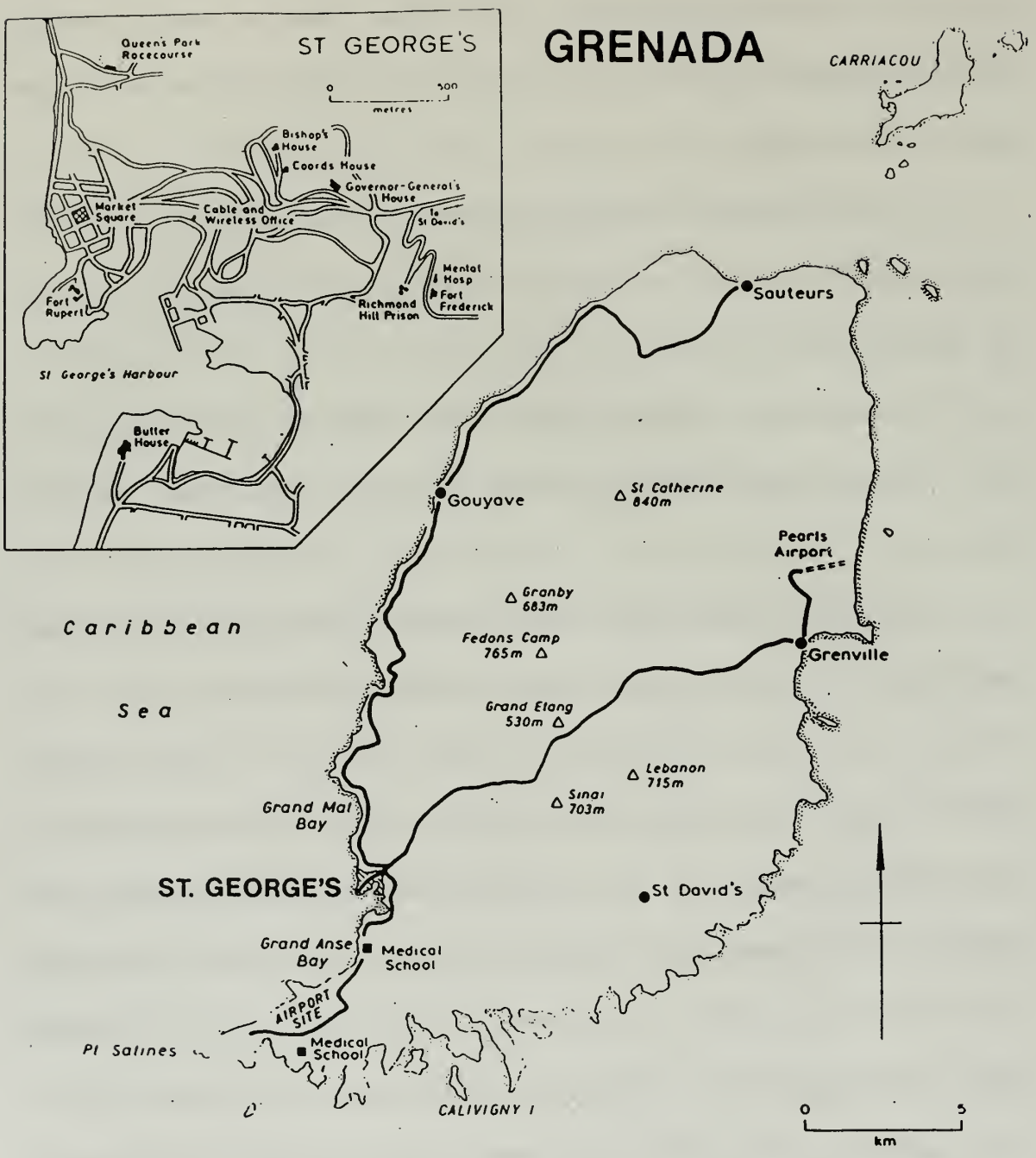

Figure 1. Map of Grenada. From Payne, A., *GRENADA, Revolution and Invasion*, Croom Helm Ltd., 1984, p.3.

launchers, fragmentation grenades, and an antitank rocket, would then secure the governor and his staff. At the last minute SEAL Team 6 was chosen. SEAL Team 6 is primarily a counterterrorist force that had only recently been established. Greg Walker, in his book At the Hurricane's Eye, asserts that the last minute change was by direction of the chairman of the JCS who wanted the newly formed SEAL Team 6 to be "bloodied." [5] Regardless of the reason, the members of SEAL Team 6 who conducted the mission had less than 72 hours from their time of recall to H-Hour. In addition, these SEALs planned to carry far less fire power than the other SEALs, apparently expecting only minimal opposition. Team 6 SEALs planned to split their team into two elements aboard two separate helicopters. H-Hour was chosen so that the insertion could be conducted under the cover of darkness. Upon flying to the General's residence, the SEALs would then fastrope into the compound, a method in which each man slides unattached down a thick rope allowing for rapid deployment of forces. They would then secure General Scoon and his staff and wait until being relieved by a follow-on force of Rangers.

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[5] Walker, G., *At The Hurricane's Eye*, p. 122, Ballantine Books, 1994.

The whole mission was planned to be over within four hours. The time crunch, however, prevented them from conducting any rehearsals and greatly shortened the normal planning time of 96-120 hours that SEAL doctrine states is necessary to adequately plan and prepare for a mission. Lessons learned from the mission also state that various aspects of standard SEAL planning procedures were not considered during the planning for this mission. Specifically such oversights included a fire support plan, an escape and evasion plan, a link-up plan and alternate or contingency plans. Also during planning stages while at Fort Bragg North Carolina, there were numerous changes to the communications plan. According to one official report, it is not clear whether or not there was a published Communications and Electronics Operating Instruction (CEOI) that is normally required for all military operations. Assertions have been made that both frequencies and satellite information that should have been contained in the CEOI were changed without advising the operational forces. This coupled with constant changes in tasking, lack of intelligence, and numerous delays were already causing considerable confusion before the mission even began.

3. Preparatory Phase Analysis

Already many elements of both Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories can be addressed. Most glaring of Vandenbroucke's key elements was intelligence shortfalls. Because not one HUMINT source was available, very little information was known about the actual forces at the Scoon residence, the layout of the compound, or the reaction forces that might be alerted to the assault. Additionally, the entire invasion plan has been cited as allowing for little or no advance warning or opportunity for coordination by the JTF in charge. If this problem is still prevalent during the execution phase, this would be identified by Vandenbroucke as a source of poor coordination that he says contributes to failure.

Second, the decision to use SEAL Team 6, primarily a counterterrorist force, on this mission was questioned by many prior to and after the operation. Obviously this begs the question of what advice was being given to the JCS on the mission and capabilities of this specialized force. In fact, one of the lessons learned from the operation was that conventional forces were unfamiliar with the capabilities *and* limitations of SEALs. This report also concludes that

it is imperative that Naval Special Warfare (NSW) unit leaders make every effort possible to familiarize their conventional forces commanders with NSW unit capabilities and limitations.[6] These statements support Vandenbroucke's concern that senior military leaders were given inadequate information.

Finally, Vandenbroucke's theory on "wishful thinking" is demonstrated in the lack of concern over the poor intelligence available. There was no accurate intelligence on resistance forces nor even accurate maps of the General's compound. All of this was apparently wished away as not being essential to conduct the mission, even though standard SEAL mission planning guidance contains these kinds of planning criteria. Additionally, the chance that they might encounter resistance was wished away as demonstrated by the lack of a fire support plan or escape and evasion plan should things go wrong.

So far, all but one of Vandenbroucke's elements have been identified as having occurred during the preparatory phase of this mission. Even Vandenbroucke's last element, micromanagement from outside the theater of operations, is

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[6] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation URGENT FURY, p. 8-2.

quite possibly illustrated in the last minute change by the JCS to task SEAL Team 6 instead of the already tasked SEAL Platoon floating off Grenada. Although this is micromanagement, it is not strictly speaking an example of "over control" of the execution phase of the operation that Vandenbroucke identifies. We must examine the execution phase of the Grenada operation to conclusively test this final element of Vandenbroucke's theory.

In terms of McRaven's theory, many problems can also be identified in the preparatory phase of this mission. The elements of *simplicity* and *surprise* have properly been accounted for in the plan for this mission. The plan is simple. The team is simply planning to fly in, secure Scoon and his staff, and await relief. They are planning to go in by cover of darkness to achieve surprise. If all goes as planned, these two elements seem to be properly addressed. The remaining four elements of McRaven's theory; *speed, security, repetition,* and *purpose,* are not properly addressed, however. The mission plan disregards speed in that the mission is to last at least four hours. McRaven states that in most special operations success depends on seconds and minutes, not hours. In regards to security,

McRaven would say that the concern for security was proper, but that the concerns for security must not hamper mission planning, which is clearly the case here. The severe compartmentalization required to satisfy the OPSEC order was a problem throughout the preparatory phase. One official document states that "Initial planning for the operation called for it to be a SOF operation, but as events unfolded other Army and Marine units became involved and the SOF plan was co-opted. Integration of SOF and conventional units was poor from the start and severely hampered by excessive operational security."[7] If the restrictions imposed by the strict OPSEC requirements could have been worked out perhaps proper fire support and contingency plans could have been planned for in this mission.

Similarly, McRaven's element of repetition was completely violated. Regardless of whether there was enough time or intelligence to conduct proper rehearsals, the fact is that no rehearsals were conducted. The last element of purpose has already been shown to be a potential problem as well. As has been shown, there is evidence that the tasking for the mission changed several times while the team was

[7] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation URGENT FURY, p. 8-1.

planning for the mission. Additionally, lessons learned state that there existed a problem for many of the SOF missions, including this one, in regards to the absence of a detailed mission statement to guide the planning process.

In summary, all but one of Vandenbroucke's elements for the lack of success of U.S. special operations can be identified during the preparatory phase of this mission. Vandenbroucke's last element, micromanagement outside the theater of operations has arguably also been identified, but further analysis of the execution phase is required. As for McRaven, two of McRaven's elements for the successful conduct of special operations have been planned for, and four have not. Simplicity and surprise have been planned for. Speed, security, repetition, and purpose represented a potential problem. According to McRaven, if even one these elements of success is not adhered to, the mission will invariably encounter some degree of failure. Examining the execution phase will reveal whether or not this was true for the rescue of Governor General Scoon and his staff.

4. Execution Phase

SEAL Team 6 was ordered to go in during the early morning hours of October 25. The original plan called for

the SEALs to insert by helicopter during the night, but delays caused the SEALs to have to insert during daylight hours. Some time before 0600, prior to the SEALs insertion, a call to arms to repel the U.S. invasion could be heard being broadcast over Radio Free Grenada. Surprise was lost. The force was divided into two elements, each on a separate Blackhawk helicopter. As the helicopters flew over the compound they were met by waiting PRA forces who immediately opened fire on the helicopters. Intelligence had not predicted such resistance and in addition to this problem, the helicopters had some difficulty locating an area free of power lines that would be suitable for inserting the SEALs. On the following page is a diagram depicting the drawing used by the SEALs to plan their assault (note the lack of critical details such as power lines and gradient). This information was unavailable because of the serious lack of HUMINT during the entire invasion. One senior officer, Major General Hugh L. Cox stated, "...In the Grenada operation, the human intelligence factor that can contribute to mission success was not what it should have been, and we

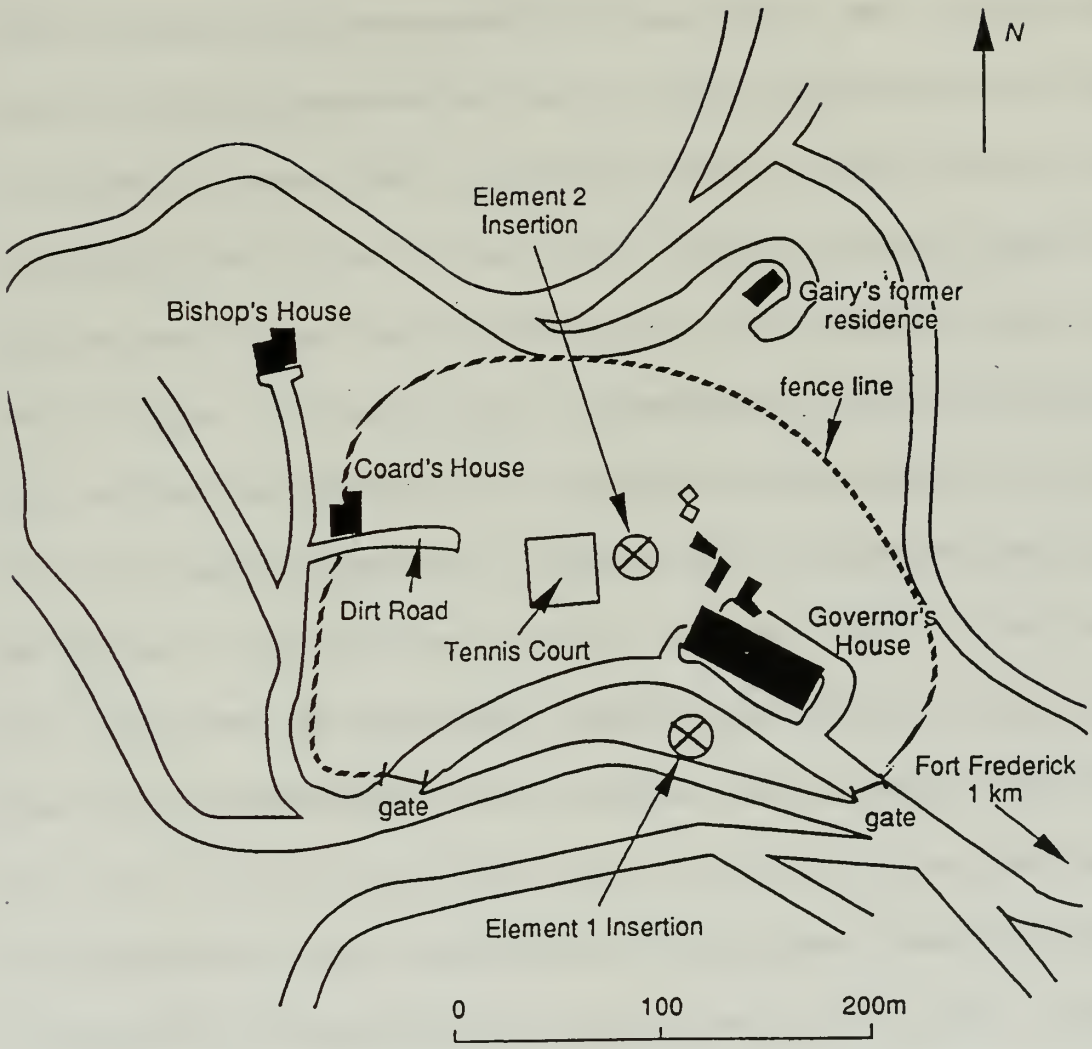

Figure 2. Sketch of compound. From Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation URGENT FURY.

need to do a better job for the future in that particular area."[8]

The first Blackhawk helicopter carrying part of the SEAL team arrived near the Governor's mansion and immediately came under heavy fire from PRA and Cuban troops. Despite being badly shot up the helicopter quickly dropped its team of SEALs by fastrope and pulled away. Unknown to the SEALs as they struck the ground, they found themselves on a very steep hill and several lost their footing and tumbled down the embankment. Scrambling to regain their footing, thirteen SEALs fought their way across the lawn and into the mansion. The second helicopter carrying the remainder of the team was ordered away by the commander on the ground. The SEALs quickly assessed the situation and discovered that in the confusion of the insertion they had forgotten their

long range radio and they had no backup. One of the lessons learned from this mission was that during short flights, [one should] not remove operational equipment. For longer flights, always pass a two-minute stand-by before the final

[8] Vandenbroucke, L.S., *Perilous Options: Special Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy*, p. 170, Oxford University Press, 1993.

approach into the target area. This allows for everyone to make final preparations before the actual insertion.

The SEALs quickly found Governor General Scoon and secured him in a safe location. They then positioned themselves inside the mansion so that they had interlocking fields of fire surrounding the governor's mansion. The only long range weapon that the SEALs had was a G3 SG/1 sniper rifle. Using this rifle, one SEAL rotated around the various positions and was able to hit any enemy troops that were foolish enough to show themselves. The PRA commander, realizing the difficulty of approaching the mansion decided to wait for reinforcements, including three BTR-60PB armored personnel carriers.[9]

The loss of the long range radio limited the SEALs ability to communicate with the rest of the U.S. troops in the area. While the SEALs were deciding their next move, the phone rang. Scoon answered it and found himself talking to the local police chief. The police chief asked, "How are they (the SEALs) armed?" Scoon's response was, "they are armed to the teeth!" This simple response is credited with serving as an excellent deception that likely served as a

[9] Dockery, K., *SEALS in Action,* p. 268, Bill Fawcett & Associates, 1991.

deterrent to the PRA in assaulting the mansion and overwhelming the SEALs. This fortuitous conversation also gave the SEALs the idea to use the phone system to establish communications with outside forces. Meanwhile the other SEALs who were on the second helicopter established a communications relay on a nearby hill using Motorola MX-360s which the SEALs inside the mansion possessed. The fix was not perfect, but at least they now had communications.

The SEALs were able to inform Admiral Metcalf of their precarious situation. Admiral Metcalf immediately sent two AH-1T SeaCobra helicopter gunships to give the SEALs much needed air cover. Unfortunately, both of the helicopters were shot down by heavy fire from multiple 23-mm cannons as well as 14.5-mm rounds from a hidden BTR-60. After the SeaCobras were shot down, the PRA commander decided to assault the mansion. An AC-130 Spectre gunship arrived just as the attack was beginning. The AC-130 immediately destroyed one of the BTR-60PBs and stopped the attack. The AC-130 then remained on station for the rest of the day, circling above the mansion, just beyond the range of ground based antiaircraft guns. Metcalf also ordered a full scale air assault to destroy the antiaircraft guns that had been

responsible for the downing of the SeaCobras. The PRA contented itself with repeated attacks against the SEALs from a distance, utilizing grenades and stand off weapons.

During the night of October 25, Admiral Metcalf ordered the LST Manitowoc, carrying Marine Company Golf, to steam around the island and land its men at Saint George where they were then to make their way to the mansion to relieve the SEALs. In addition to these Marines, they were also joined by Fox company who were already on the island and were transported by helicopter to link up with Golf company. Golf company came ashore at Grand Mal Bay at 0400. Reinforced by five M60A1 tanks landed by the LSD Fort Snelling, and joined by Fox company, the combined Marine team made their way to rescue the trapped SEALs.

One Grenadian armored personnel carrier tried to stop the Marines but was quickly destroyed by one of the M60A1s. With close air support from Navy attack air craft from the Independence, Golf company relieved the exhausted and thankful SEALs at 0712. The SEALs mission had lasted almost 24 hours instead of the planned 4 hours. Governor General Scoon, his staff, and the SEALs were quickly evacuated by helicopter to an awaiting ship offshore.

5. Execution Phase Analysis

Overall, Operation URGENT FURY was considered to be a success. All military objectives were accomplished , albeit not always according to plan. For Naval Special Warfare, however, the operation was something less than a success. The SEALs were not prepared, and although they displayed courage and resourcefulness in the face of great personal risk, they underestimated the enemy and almost had a disaster on their hands. The Governor General and his staff were rescued, not by the SEALs, but by the Marines. The SEALs did not have adequate intelligence or time to properly plan for the mission. In addition, the lack of reliable information provided to commanders regarding the capabilities of the SEALs resulted in their being misused. The bottom line, however, is that the SEALs had a poor plan.

As has been shown already, using Vandenbroucke's theory one can identify several important problems in the preparation phase of this mission. As indicated earlier, intelligence was extremely poor. Lack of intelligence on the layout of the compound resulted in a poor choice for the landing zone. Lack of intelligence on surrounding enemy forces prevented the team from being prepared for the stiff

resistance they encountered. Wishful thinking on the part of the SEALs could be the reason that they underestimated potential enemy strength. Their plan was poor and lacked sufficient contingencies because they wished the possibility of problems away.

Although the preparatory phase of the mission indicated the possibility of poor coordination, the execution phase actually displayed extremely good coordination. Once the problems with communications were resolved, the SEALs were able to coordinate and direct unplanned fire support that in all likelihood saved themselves and the Governor General. In addition, the rescue of the SEALs and the governor by the Marines displayed excellent operational coordination. Finally, there seems to be no indication that this mission displayed any micromanagement from outside the theater of operations during the execution phase of the operation.

Vandenbroucke's elements of poor intelligence, poor advice to decision makers and wishful thinking are all prevalent in this mission; whereas Vandenbroucke's elements of poor coordination and micromanagement are not apparent.

Looking at the execution phase in McRaven's terms, we can see many problems as well. Surprise was lost as the

SEALs conducted a near daylight assault against an already alerted enemy because of poor security. The need for speed, in the end, was further acerbated when the mission lasted 24 hours instead of the planned 4 hours. Rehearsals were not conducted and perhaps repetition would have prevented mission critical equipment, such as a long range radio, from being left on the helicopter. Simplicity was planned for, but actually was not executed in that the mission evolved into the use of several fire support platforms and multiple forces. The mission actually became increasingly complicated as it unfolded, but was still successful because of these added complications. The complication of the mission, however, was on the side of conventional forces coordinating the rescue, not by special operations forces conducting the mission.

If we consider only the special operations part of this mission, not the conventional force rescue, this mission largely failed, as McRaven's theory would have predicted. McRaven states that if even one of his elements is overlooked the mission can be expected to suffer at least some degree of failure. Since these SEALs did not plan on relying on being rescued by Marines, it is safe to say that

they failed. Surprise, speed, security, and repetition were all a problem during the execution phase of this mission. Perhaps if these elements of McRaven's theory had been adhered to, the mission would have been successful. As it stands, however, McRaven's theory seems to at least help to explain mission failure.

The real problem with this mission seems to be the poor planning by the SEALs. For whatever reason, they forgot many of the basics for any mission such as contingencies and communications. In the face of unknowns due to poor intelligence, McRaven says that one should use best judgment. Perhaps a better way of stating it would be to plan for the worst case scenario. If the SEALs had planned for the possibility of greater resistance they would have had greater firepower and would have had contingencies to react to the opposition. At any rate, this mission was ill conceived and poorly executed by the SEALs involved. One would not expect elite forces to leave their radio on the insertion platform. Communications are critical to any mission. The fact that accomplishing the mission depended on luck, ie. the use of existing phone lines to "call in the calvary," only demonstrates poor planning.

This mission does show that even the best can have problems with the basics. Move, shoot, and communicate are the cornerstones of any successful operation. When in doubt, one must have contingencies for the worst case scenario. These ideas can be drawn from both Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's broader theories, but their importance to the success of any mission make them worthy of stating specifically.

C. PANAMA: OPERATION JUST CAUSE[10]

1. Background

From 1968, when General Omar Torrijos Herrera seized power in a coup d'etat, until Operation JUST CAUSE, Panama had for all intents and purposes become a military dictatorship. Omar Torrijos died in a mysterious plane crash in August 1981 and Colonel Manuel Noriega, Torrijos' chief intelligence officer, rose to power by outmaneuvering his opponents within the National Guard. By August 1983, Noriega had installed himself as leader of the newly named Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF), promoted himself to

[10] Unless otherwise noted, information pertaining to this mission was drawn primarily from Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned from operation JUST CAUSE.

General, and consolidated his hold on the country's political and military institutions.

Noriega enforced his rule through repression and corruption. The United States initially ignored Noriega's abuse of power in exchange for his support of U.S. policy initiatives in Central America. This changed when in February of 1988 two separate U.S. federal grand juries indicted Noriega on drug charges. After a failed coup attempt by a small group of PDF officers, diplomatic attempts were made to try to convince Noriega to relinquish power. Noriega responded by increasing the repression of his regime. President Reagan, in turn, responded by levying economic sanctions against Panama.

Because of the worsening situation in Panama, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directed the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) to prepare a commander's estimate on how the U.S. could intervene with military force to overthrow General Noriega. The segment of the plan that detailed U.S. offensive combat operations in Panama was called BLUE SPOON.

In May 1989, Noriega was elected President of Panama through blatant vote fraud. In response to the election, two parts of USSOUTHCOM's plans were initiated: the

reinforcement of SOUTHCOM and the evacuation of non-combatant personnel.

On October 3, 1989 another attempt was made to overthrow Noriega. This time the attempt was made by PDF chief of security, Major Moises Giroldi. Giroldi asked for but did not receive U.S. aid in his attempt. Consequently the attempt failed. Having survived the attempt, Noriega strengthened his position by purging the PDF of suspected opponents. On December 15, 1989, Panama's National Assembly declared Noriega the maximum leader for national liberation and more importantly declared a state of war to exist between Panama and the U.S.

The next day, December 16, a confrontation occurred between U.S. and PDF personnel at a roadblock. At about 2100 hours that evening, PDF soldiers stopped a Navy SEAL lieutenant and his wife. While their identities were being checked, four American officers arrived at the roadblock. Sensing the actions of the soldiers and the growing crowd as hostile, the driver of one of the cars broke through the roadblock. The PDF soldiers opened fire wounding one and eventually killing another. Meanwhile, the SEAL, who was

assigned to Special Boat Unit 26, and his wife were taken to a local police station for questioning.

After an hour of questioning by police, a PDF major arrived and led them away at gun point. They were taken to the military headquarters for interrogation. Supervised by the PDF major, soldiers beat and kicked the SEAL and slammed his wife's head against a wall and threatened to rape her. Even after severely beating the SEAL and the abuse to his wife, neither of them would divulge any information other than he operated boats on the canal. His captors then told him they were going to kill him. The SEAL was led outside in front of a firing squad. The orders, "ready, aim, fire!" were given. None of the weapons fired. Unknown to the Seal at the time, the weapons were not loaded. After several more hours of interrogation, the SEAL and his wife were then released.

2. Preparatory Phase

Before midnight that same day, President Bush had been briefed on the incident. After quietly stating, "enough is enough," he sought advice from his senior advisors[11]. With the concurrence of General Powell, LTG Kelly (the JCS J3),

[11] Dockery, K., *SEALs in Action*, p. 333, Bill Fawcett & Associates, 1991.

and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff, only one option was presented. That option was Operation BLUE SPOON. President Bush accepted the plan and ordered its implementation. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney came up with the new name for the operation, Operation JUST CAUSE.

The plan had three basic goals:

1. The quick neutralization or removal of any military resistance to the U.S. forces. This was directed primarily at the Panama Defense Force, but Noriega's "Dignity Battalions" were also targeted.

2. The capture of General Noriega himself.

3. The installation of a stable, democratically elected government and the restoration of order to the country.

Initial planning for Operation JUST CAUSE had been started in 1988. At that time USSOUTHCOM had asked for assistance from U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). At the request, USSOCOM dispatched a planning team to Panama that arrived on 13 March 1988. Among the planners were three Naval Special Warfare planners: The Commanding Officer, SEAL Team FOUR (ST-4), and two staff planners from Naval Special Warfare Group TWO (NSWG-2). USCINCSO's

(United States Commander in Chief Southern Command) initial guidance to the assembled planners was to:

1. Interdict rather than attempt to destroy PDF units.

2. Minimize casualties and damage to Panamanian installations.

3. Capture, not kill, Noriega.

Working with Special Operations Command, Special Operations Command South (SOCSO), and Joint Task Force (JTF) Panama, the planners drafted the SOF portion of BLUE SPOON within 36 hours. The original plan called for SOF forces to seize seven command and control targets:

- the Comandancia (Noriega's headquarters)
- the PDF bases at Rio Hato and David
- the Paitilla Airfield
- Tocumen/Torrijos Airport
- PDF patrol boats in Balboa Harbor, and
- the Flamenco Island complex.

To achieve the surprise critical to the plan, H-Hour was selected as 0100 hours to make use of SOF night fighting capabilities.

The plan was approved and issued by SOUTHCOM on 17 March 1988. The plan formalized Navy SOF's involvement in the operation. The following month SOUTHCOM issued USCINCSO OPORD 5-88 (BLUE SPOON) that detailed the Navy SOF missions. These missions were:

1. Perform reconnaissance and surveillance on, and isolate and contain PDF forces at Flemenco Island.

2. Seize/control or render inoperable patrol boats in Balboa Harbor.

3. Perform reconnaissance and surveillance on Paitilla airfield and deny the use of it to PDF forces.

Objections were made by several planners on whether the Paitilla mission was appropriate for SEALs. SEALs seldom operate tactically in more than one platoon, and often in only squads of half that size. This mission however would obviously require more than just one SEAL platoon. Despite these objections and because no other viable options were offered, the mission remained.

TF WHITE was designated as the Navy SOF Task Force. Task Unit (TU) PAPA, of TF WHITE, was assigned the Paitilla mission. The objectives of the mission were to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance of Paitilla airfield,

disable high value PDF aircraft, interdict aircraft approaching or attempting to leave, be prepared to disable other aircraft as required, and otherwise deny the PDF the use of the airfield. During the spring of 1988 unit level rehearsals were conducted at Fentress, a Navy auxiliary airfield in Virginia. The plan was to land two SEAL platoons by Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRRC) on Paitilla airfield's seaward side. An SBU-26 patrol boat would be used to escort ten CRRCs containing the SEALs and their equipment. After coming ashore, both SEAL platoons were to form in a staggered formation and quickly run up the side of the runway just short of Noriega's hangar. Relying on stealth and surprise, the SEALs were to overpower any defenders and puncture the tires of Noriega's plane in accordance with the current Rules of Engagement (ROE). They were then to form a defensive perimeter and hold the airfield for four to five hours until conventional forces would relieve them. This plan was simple enough if all assumptions about the PDF resistance being minimal were accurate. Despite seeming to be simple, the rehearsals still brought out the difficulty of maneuvering two platoons and maintaining command and control. It was decided

therefore, to maneuver the platoons separately and only bring them together if necessary. Commander, Naval Special Warfare Group TWO, Captain Sandoz, ordered that rehearsals be conducted every six months to iron out any problems.

In July 1989, USSOCOM held a commanders conference to review preparations conducted thus far. During this conference General Lindsay, USCINCSOC, expressed two concerns about the Paitilla mission. He felt that despite the optimism felt by the Captain Sandoz, that two platoons were enough, he believed that the force should be increased. He also felt it would be wise to plan on holding the airfield for more than the expected four to five hours until reinforcements arrived. These changes were approved at a SOUTHCOM meeting in mid November. Additionally, the ROE were changed to allow more latitude in the use of force. Concerning the Paitilla mission the changes now included:

1. Committing an additional platoon to the assault force as a reserve against possible PDF resistance. The total number of SEAL platoons was now three.

2. The tactics were altered to reflect the more aggressive rules of engagement. To disable PDF aircraft, the SEALs were now permitted to go beyond flattening the

tires and could rely on their weapons, AT-4 rockets, M-16s, and M-60 machine guns to damage the aircraft.

3. Gunfire support to the mission was increased. An AC-130 was assigned to support the force and a two-man USAF Combat Controller Team (CCT) was designated to direct the AC-130 gunfire.

A two man mortar element was also added. Additionally, three two man reconnaissance teams were added to provide early warning of any attempts by the PDF to provide reinforcements to what was expected to be only four to six guards at the airfield. Another concern was that as of 15 November 1989, all HUMINT on the target ceased as a result of orders restricting movement of all Americans in Panama. This same concern for HUMINT would be expressed in later stages of mission planning.

From 12-15 December 1989, a major full dress rehearsal of all SOF forces was conducted. To replicate Paitilla airfield, NSWG-2 used a rural grass airfield at Navarre, Florida, near Eglin AFB. Navarre had only a few light aircraft and few buildings, this being a significant contrast to Paitilla's numerous aircraft and many buildings and hangars. Despite this, the SEALs conducted two mock

assaults. The planned assault force had by this time expanded to over 60 personnel with the addition of a third SEAL platoon, a mortar crew, and teams of Signal Intelligence (SIGINT), Pyschological Operations (PSYOPs), Reconnaisance and Surveillance (R&S), and CCT. The rehearsal, though, consisted of only about 42 men. Although only two platoons participated, to add realism one platoon was split in two to simulate the third platoon. During the rehearsal it was evident again that command and control was exceedingly difficult. One SEAL platoon commander recalled, "a number of times we could see people (the opposition forces) moving. Okay, we need to go ahead and get on line to engage them...Because the rules of engagement.. if a guy's not a threat, if you can't tell whether he has a rifle, don't open up. It was never clear...Three times: on line, off line, on line. Eventually we were just like, well forget this. We'll just get on line and stay there."[12] Additional concerns were raised by senior enlisted that moving in the rehearsed L-shape formation required too much time to form a defensive line if a threat developed. Another problem surfaced regarding the medical evacuation

[12] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 4-18.

(MEDEVAC) procedures. Despite using correct radio procedures, SEAL medics had difficulty getting their request for a MEDEVAC through the JSOTF command post. After significant delay, one finally arrived. These issues were brought up to the Ground Force Commander (GFC), Commander McGraff, but he felt comfortable with the rehearsal and apparently dismissed these concerns.

In the after action review held on Friday 15 December, the field commanders briefed optimistically about the results of the rehearsals. In regard to the rehearsals, General Lindsay commented, "The rehearsal went well. It went astonishingly well. In fact, Sunday morning on December 17 I talked with General Powell, he asked me could we do it? I said, absolutely. We did it the other night. The only thing that bothers me is that there ought to be a few problems. We didn't have any problems. Since there is always a bit of luck involved, I hope we haven't used up all our good luck."[13] Perhaps the Navy side of the house should have felt the same.

On the afternoon of 17 December President Bush ordered the invasion. As NSWG-2 forces prepared to deploy, changes

[13] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 4-19.

were made to the plan. Because of concerns over the leadership abilities of Commander McGrath, and communications concerns, Captain Sandoz made several drastic changes to the task organization of TU-PAPA. He decided to separate the force into two elements. The assault force, renamed the ground force, would include three SEAL platoons, a two man CCT, and a six man command and mortar element including the ground force commander - a total of 62 men. The other element was to be the support force. Remaining off shore during the assault the support force consisted of three R&S teams, two patrol boats with crews and detachments of SIGINT and PSYOP- a total of 26 personnel. He also decided that the commander of the entire Paitilla operation should remain with the patrol boats to facilitate communications back to the Task Unit. This job was assigned to McGrath. An additional command position was established subordinate to McGrath to command the ground operations. Sandoz assigned ST-4's Executive Officer (XO) to this position. Although the XO had not rehearsed any of the ground operations, Sandoz felt he was familiar enough with the operation to be the ground force leader.

An additional change was made by McGrath. As the task unit readied to depart, one SEAL officer who had been temporarily assigned as a patient at Walter Reed Army Hospital, requested that he be allowed on the mission. He was the assistant platoon commander of one of the assigned platoons. After being told by his XO that only the CO could make that decision, he went to McGrath. McGrath approved. This officer was later killed in action on Paitilla Airfield.

3. Preparatory Phase Analysis

Already many elements of Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories have been identified in the planning stages of this mission. Before examining the execution phase of this mission, it might be insightful to see if the outcome of the mission can be predicted in terms of how well these elements have been addressed.

In terms of Vandenbroucke, many of his ideas have surfaced. Vandenbroucke cites faulty intelligence, especially HUMINT, as a source of failure in U.S. special operations. Mission planning, in this case, had identified HUMINT as a variable of significant concern. Specifically, the lack of HUMINT was evident since this information

effectively stopped as a result of personnel movements being restricted in Panama. In fact, intelligence shortfalls such as numbers of enemy personnel, were repeatedly expressed as being a hindrance in all the SOF target assessments, including Paitilla Airfield.

Already poor coordination, Vandenbroucke's second element, has been demonstrated. During several rehearsals, the SEALs themselves had problems coordinating the movements of the two platoons involved. This being even more of a concern since three platoons were to be used on the actual mission. Additionally, they had problems coordinating the MEDEVAC procedures at the Navarre rehearsal. Also as a result of concerns over leadership and communications, both critical elements of coordinating forces, the entire task organization was restructured, but not rehearsed, just prior to deployment.

Vandenbroucke's next two common problems are inadequate information and advice provided to decision makers and wishful thinking on the part of decision makers. There are numerous times when these two problems are demonstrated. When General Lindsay boasts to General Powell that all the rehearsals went off with no problems, somehow the problems

the SEALs had were overlooked. In fact, how could either McGrath or Sandoz advise General Lindsay they were ready when they had not even conducted a proper rehearsal with an accurate depiction of Paitilla Airfield and the actual forces that were to be utilized? Obviously, at least McGrath and Sandoz fell victim to Vandenbroucke's problem of wishful thinking on the part of decision makers. Apparently concerns raised about this not being a SEAL mission, or that during the rehearsed movements the SEALs were too exposed and vulnerable, or that command and control was still a problem, were simply wished away by senior SEAL leaders involved in this mission.

In fact, the only problem that Vandenbroucke identifies that has not been demonstrated already, is his idea of micromanagement by leaders outside the theater during execution. This, perhaps because the execution phase has not yet been examined. Vandenbroucke would probably say that this mission has already failed even before it begins.

Now in terms of McRaven. McRaven's first principle is simplicity. When the force structure was changed from only two platoons totaling about twenty four personnel, to three platoons and over sixty personnel the complexity of the plan

increased dramatically. The change in command and control positions also increased the complexity of the operation. Although these changes might be justified, they nonetheless change a simple plan to a very complex plan with inherent command and control problems.

McRaven's principles of security and surprise have been mentioned already as well. H-Hour was originally chosen as 0100 to facilitate surprise, but only if the mission could be kept a secret. Examining the execution phase will reveal if this consideration was enough. Although TU-PAPA's plan of patroling some forty plus men wearing 100-120 pound packs down an open runway seems unlikely to achieve the benefits from the element of surprise.

McRaven's element of repetition seems to be understood to some extent by these planners. When General Lindsay ordered all SOF personnel to conduct full dress rehearsals, he clearly demonstrated an understanding of the utility of repetition. A pity that the senior SEAL planners did not have this same understanding. As McRaven points out, it is essential that the actual participants of a mission do the rehearsals. If the senior SEAL planners, specifically McGrath and Sandoz, properly understood this, then the

Navarre rehearsals would have had all three planned platoons, not just two, and all 62 participants, not just 42, take part. Additionally, Captain Sandoz and Commander McGrath, having made such a drastic change to the task organization at the last minute, including putting people in key positions of leadership despite their having never been rehearsed, greatly diminished the expected effectiveness of the rehearsals conducted.

McRaven's last two elements of his theory, speed and purpose were arguably overlooked as well. McRaven specifically recognizes that special operations forces are not manned or equipped to conduct long duration engagements. McRaven states that the will of the enemy to resist is a given and that over time the frictions of war work only against special operations forces.[14] This mission was expected to last at least four hours, and General Lindsay warned Captain Sandoz that he should plan for even longer. In McRaven's case studies the longest mission was at Saint-Nazaire and was planned to last two hours while the average time of all the missions was only thirty minutes. Clearly

[14] McRaven, W. H., *Spec Ops,* p. 19, Presidio Press, 1995.

this mission blatantly violates McRaven's principle of speed.

Finally, McRaven points out that a clear purpose was essential for success. Already the ROE has changed from one that required minimal damage to property which meant that the SEALs could only slash tires, to permissive force that allowed the SEALs to use their stand off weapons. Aside from the problems expressed by the SEAL platoon commander in regards to whether or not the enemy could be engaged, Sandoz, the TF-WHITE commander, also expressed confusion about the ROE. He said the ROE were, "a constant variable equation - with the variables being the necessary level of destruction to accomplish the task, safety to U.S. forces and the psychological impact we wanted to have on Noriega and his regime."[15] Obviously the exact purpose of this mission was already beginning to confuse both planners and participants alike.

Of the five problems that Vandenbroucke identifies, all but one have been violated. Only his idea of micromanagement of the execution phase by leaders outside the theater of operations has not yet been demonstrated. Of

[15] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 4-9.

the six elements for a successful special operation that McRaven identifies, five are neglected in this mission plan. Simplicity, repetition, surprise, speed and purpose are all in question. Security will be examined in the execution phase. If these two theories are indeed correct, then this mission already seems to have little chance to succeed. Now let us look at the execution phase.

4. Execution Phase

During the evening of 18 December 1989, TU-PAPA left Norfolk via USAF aircraft and arrived five hours later in Panama. By 1700 on 19 December, the ground force, its equipment and CRRCs were loaded into trucks at NSWU-8, at NAVSTA Rodman, in Panama, and trucked to Kobbe beach three miles south of NSWU-8 on Fort Kobbe. Planners had decided not to launch the CRRCs from NAVSTA Rodman to avoid their being seen by the enemy. Instead the plan was altered so that the CRRCs would be trucked to Kobbe and launched from there. After launching, the SEALs would transit via CRRCs and rendezvous with awaiting patrol boats two nautical miles out (see Figure 3).

Meanwhile at NAVSTA Rodman, the support force loaded onto two SBU-26 patrol boats, one MK III patrol boat and one

patrol boat light (PBL). By 1800 all support personnel and equipment had been loaded and they departed NAVSTA Rodman and headed for the rendezvous with the ground force.

At 1800 the two forces successfully linked up at sea. The SEAL armada passed Flamenco Island and by 2130 arrived at a point just off Paitilla Airfield's seaward side. Despite some problems with the PBL, everything was going as planned. At 2145, TU-PAPA reported to TF WHITE that all boats and R&S teams were in position. The diagram on the following page is a copy of an original ST-4 briefing slide and shows the routes taken by the various elements of TU-PAPA.

Shortly after arriving at the loitering point east of the airfield. TU-PAPA received word that the ROE had been changed yet again. The Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) had relayed the changes from JTF SOUTH that the ground forces were not to destroy aircraft and collateral damage must be kept to an absolute minimum. This change forced TU-PAPA to reconsider the actions at the objective. After discussing this change with the GFC, it was decided that the SEALs could shoot the tires of Noriega's plane from

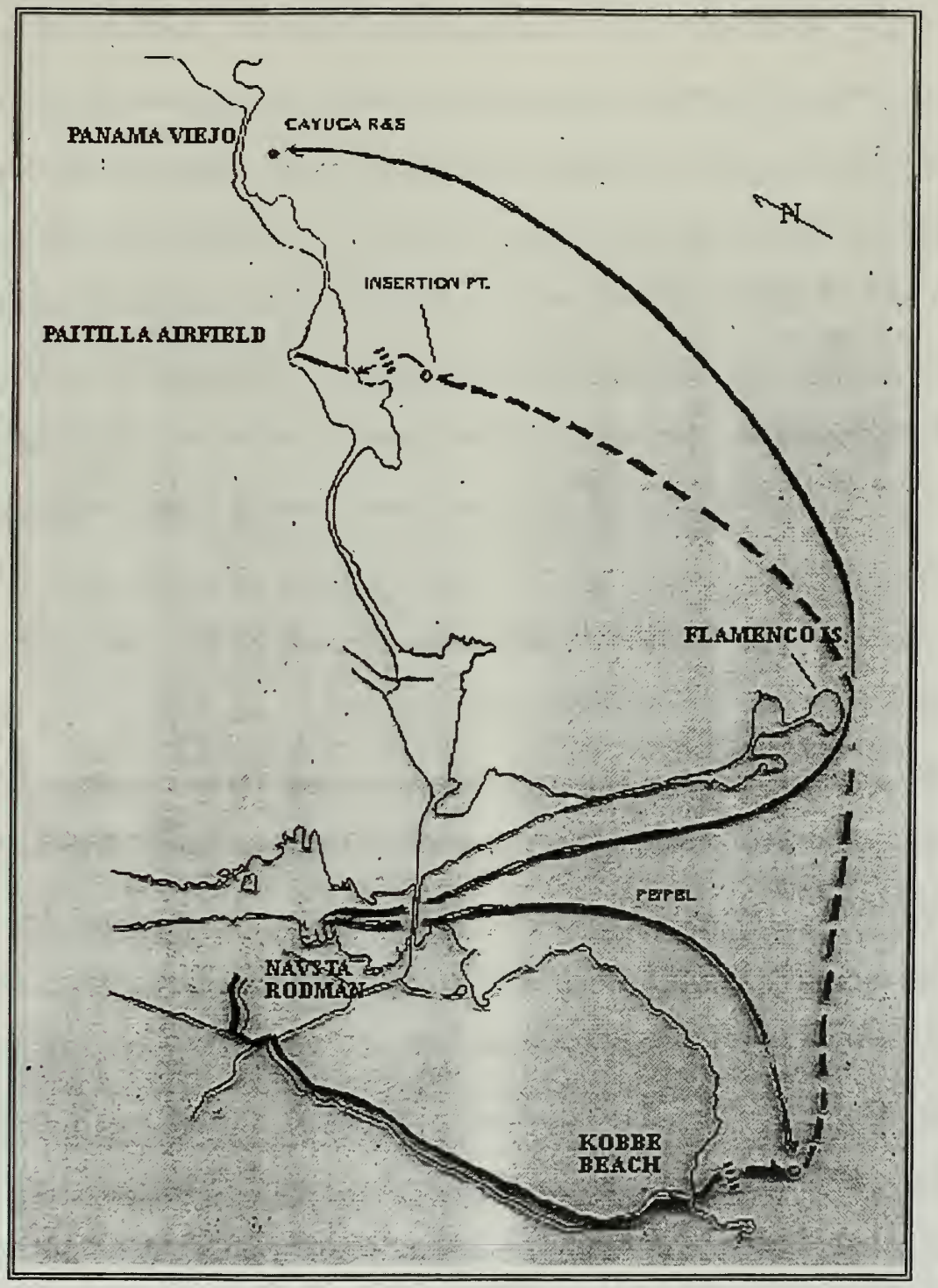

Figure 3. TU-PAPA Boat Routes. From Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p.6-8.

outside the hangar, while being careful to limit small arms fire to only what was necessary.

One hour before H-Hour, a two man swimmer scout team crawled from the water and began scouting the immediate area. Their purpose was to ensure that there were no enemy on the beach or in the area and then signal for the rest of the ground force to come ashore. After a thorough reconnaissance, the scout team determined that the area was safe and they signaled for the rest of the ground force to come ashore.

While TU-PAPA was waiting off Paitilla, LTG Stiner, commander of JTF-SOUTH, believed that surprise had been lost. He based this judgment on U.S. intelligence that indicated that the PDF forces were going to alert status and organizing their defense. McRaven's last principle of security had been breached. This would compromise H-Hour and consequently seriously call to question the element of surprise necessary for success. Intelligence indicated that one enemy calvary platoon, heavily armed, was dispatched to Paitilla. By 2200, nothing happened and the calvary platoon returned to their base at Panama Viejo. Stiner brought his

concern to USCINCSO and it was decided to move H-Hour forward to 0045, 20 December.

At 0015, TU-PAPA was informed by TF WHITE that H-Hour had been changed. The GFC then boarded his CRRC and motored to each SEAL element in the line of CRRCs and briefed them on the changes to the ROE and the change to H-Hour.

The ground force then proceeded into the beach with the guidance of the R&S team's signal. Bravo platoon landed first and formed a defensive perimeter. Then Golf platoon, Delta platoon, and last the C3 mortar element and the CCT. As the SEALs landed shooting and explosions could be heard as the other SOF forces began their assault on Panama. This put every PDF soldier in Panama on alert. Surprise was definitely lost. Compounding this problem was a report that the GFC received informing him that Noriega was inbound in a small aircraft. If the report were true, Noriega would land right in the middle of the SEALs' advance. In response the GFC yelled, "Let's go, go, go!" The SEALs reacted by splashing through the water and loudly stumbling up the beach to assemble into their platoons.

The GFC knew that the SEALs had to move quickly if they were to stop Noriega from reaching his plane and affecting

his escape. As the SEALs assembled at the south end of the runway, the GFC told the Assistant Platoon Commander (APL) of Bravo platoon to move his platoon up the runway as fast as possible and disable Noriega's jet. After word was passed among the platoons, Golf and Bravo platoon proceeded in file formation up the west side of the runway. Their speed was hampered by the weight of the 120 pound packs of equipment and ammunition that each SEAL carried. Once again, as in the rehearsals, the formation became strung out and command and control of the movement was difficult.

As Bravo and Golf made their way to Noriega's hangar, Delta platoon and the C3 mortar element headed up the east side of the runway to a position about 500 yards north. The GFC and the mortar element set up in a position about 500 yards south east of the hangars to provide fire support and command and control. Delta platoon was ordered up the runway to set up an ambush for any aircraft that might try to use the runway. Both elements were in position by 0105. The figure on the next page is a copy of an original ST-4 briefing slide and shows the positions of the forces at this point in the operation.

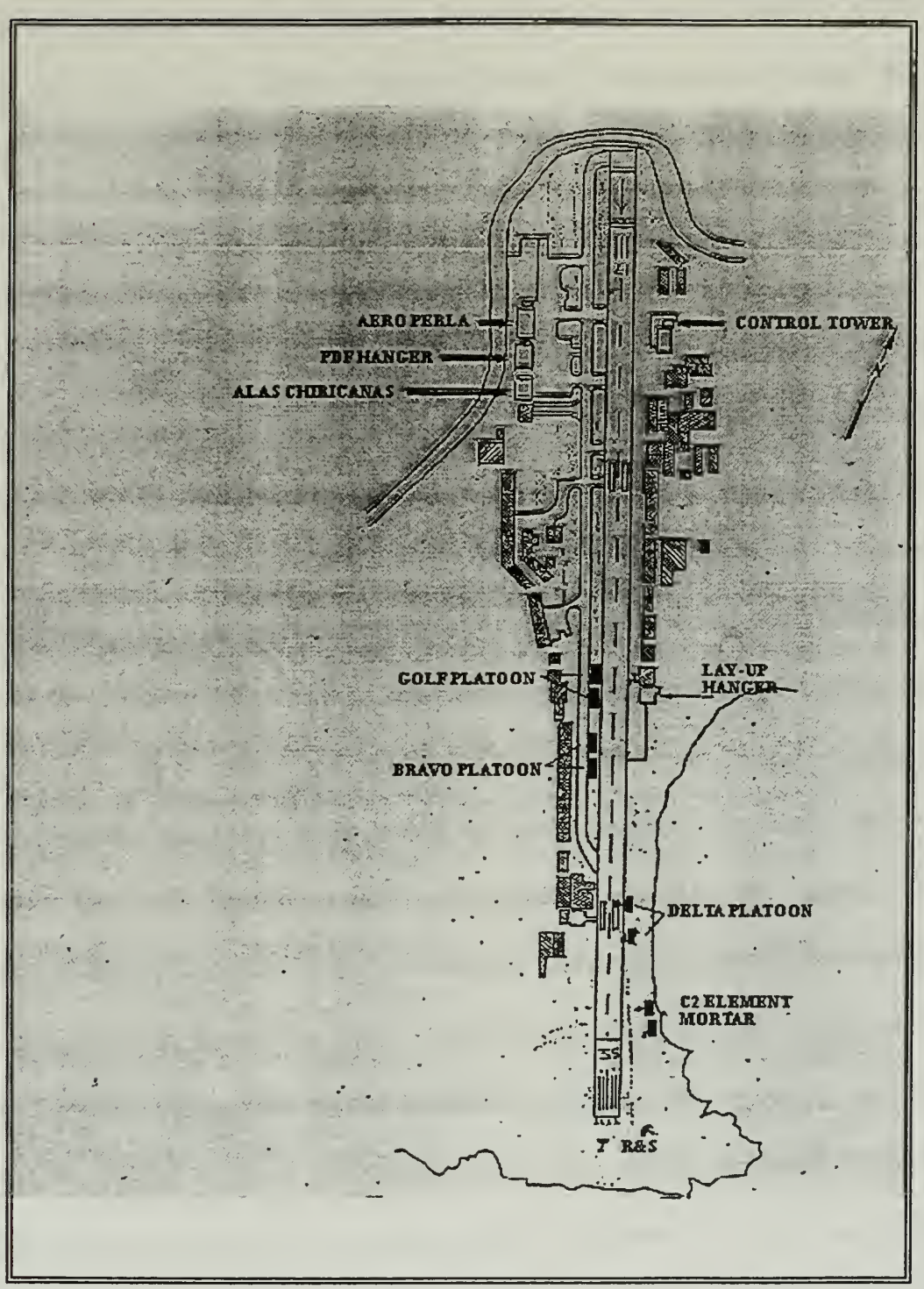

Figure 4. Paitilla Airfield Initial Positions. From Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p.6-13.

Meanwhile Golf and Bravo platoons were making their advance toward the hangars when they moved through an open field and encountered ten lightly armed civilian guards. Apparently they were guarding the many parked aircraft reportedly owned by suspected drug smugglers. The guards yelled at the SEALs to get off the runway. The SEALs, not wanting to harm civilians, told them to leave the area immediately. The guards seeing the comparably heavily armed SEALs wisely chose to leave. At this point, Golf platoon formed into an inverted L-shape formation, the same formation questioned by many during rehearsals, and began their final approach to the hangars.

At 0055 the R&S team stationed off Panama Viejo reported sighting three armored cars moving toward Paitilla. Upon receiving this information, the GFC thought that Noriega's arrival must be imminent, and that these forces were going to the airfield to provide security for his arrival. This in turn prompted the GFC to radio the advancing Golf platoon and tell them to hasten the advance of the two SEAL platoons. In response, the SEALs moved much faster then what was rehearsed or tactically prudent. Both

platoons now in inverted L-formations were quickly moving over open ground toward the hangars.

At 0101 the GFC ordered Delta platoon to run up the runway to provide support to the other two platoons. The CCT were also trying to raise the AC-130H to coordinate fire support for the impending fire fight that was certain to occur. The CCT was never able to contact the AC-130H despite all attempts. The AC-130H was considered critical to the success of the mission, especially in light of the three armored cars heading toward Paitilla. The TF-WHITE Commander recalled this affected the operation in two ways, "First, had we had the AC-130 in position and communicating with it, it is possible that using his sensors, he could have relayed information about the activity at the objective-PDF hangar and thereabouts-to us. Which would have allowed us to have a better idea of what we were going in to. Second, once the initial firefight started, had we had the AC-130, the tactic would have been to pull back and let the AC-130 do a more extensive preparatory fire on that objective. We did not have that option."[16] It was later confirmed that the AC-130, in order to comply with last

[16] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p. 6-15.

minute changes to the communications plan for Operation JUST CAUSE, had changed frequencies. No one bothered to tell the CCT of the change.

The SEALs arrived in front of the hangars at 0105. Not only were they in the open, but ambient light form surrounding buildings clearly exposed the SEALs. Bravo platoon formed in a line just south of the hangars. Golf continued north. The SEALs could see PDF guards armed with AK-47s moving inside the two northernmost hangars. As Bravo drew closer the PDF yelled "Halt, Stop or we will shoot!" The SEALs yelled back in Spanish for the guards to leave the area or die. This might actually have worked if intelligence reports were true about the PDF being unmotivated and not wanting an encounter with U.S. forces. Unfortunately the intelligence reports were wrong.

As Bravo platoon, first squad, was advancing in front of the hangars, over open ground and illuminated by ambient light, just eight to twelve feet separated each man. Just before reaching the north edge of the tarmac, the fourth man in the formation, an M-60 gunner, saw a PDF soldier assume a firing position behind barrels in front of the Aero Perlas

hangar. The M-60 gunner initiated fire, believing the guard was about to engage.

PDF guards returned fire form the two northernmost hangars. Caught with no cover, the SEALs dove for the ground. The SEALs tried to fire on the defensively positioned and well covered PDF forces. The SEALs did not stand a chance. Eight of the nine SEALs in the first squad were hit and wounded. Many of the SEALs remained where they fell, unable to move. Only the platoon commander was not hit.

Meanwhile the second squad, only 20 yards to the south, thought that first squad was simply firing into the hangar to disable the aircraft. At first they did not think anything was wrong until the Golf OIC radioed second squad and yelled, "We are in contact! I have casualties! I have a lot of casualties!" The squad's three M-60 machine guns and remaining CAR-15s began firing back and forced the PDF to stop firing and seek cover. The figure on the next page is a copy of an original ST-4 briefing slide and shows the position of the SEALs when the firefight began.

As the PDF fire lessened, the APL in second squad ordered his medical team to move to first squad to

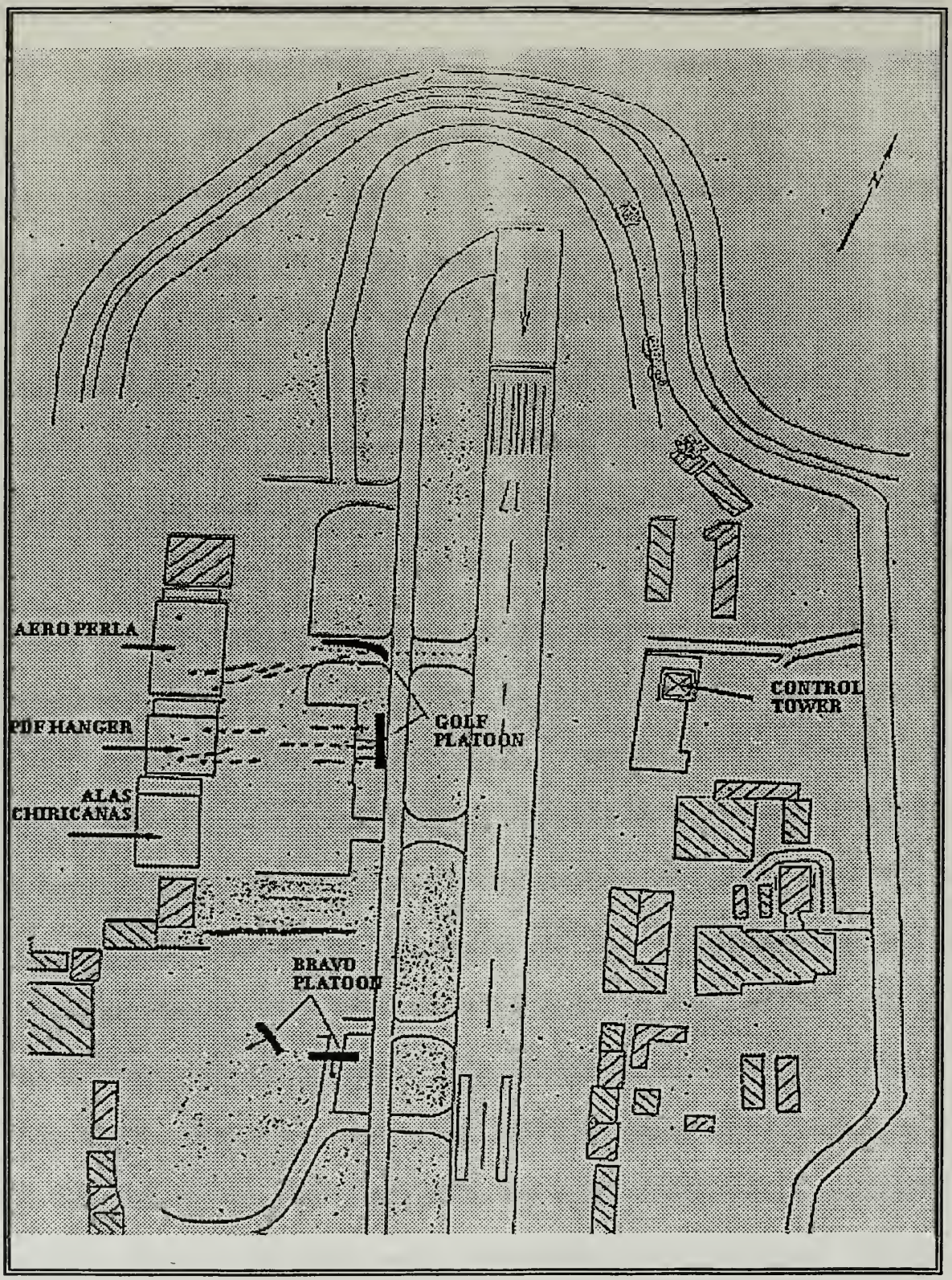

Figure 5. Positions during firefight. From Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation JUST CAUSE, p.6-20.

administer first aid. First squad's corpsman had been seriously wounded and was unable to render assistance. When the platoon chief, ENC McFaul, tried to move first squad's corpsman to safety, he was shot in the head and neck and died instantly.

By now the PDF had started firing again. The APL of Bravo platoon now moved his squad forward to provide support. During this maneuver two SEALs form Bravo platoon were hit, LTJG Connors (abdomen wound) and QM3 Anthony Duchi (leg wound).

The GFC now ordered Delta platoon to move across the tarmac to reinforce the battle. Originally the combined strength of Golf and Bravo platoons had been 33 men. This was severely diminished with one SEAL dead and ten wounded. While Delta was advancing the PDF increased their fire on the SEALs. The firefight intensified and the SEALS launched 40mm grenades into the hangars. While trying to get into a better firing position, the APL of Bravo platoon, LTJG Connor, already wounded, was mortally hit. PR3 Richard Asherman was also wounded. Despite this desperate situation, the remaining SEALs increased their effective fire and began to have an effect on the PDF. The second

firefight lasted five minutes and was winding down when Delta arrived.

During this second firefight, the GFC and four men from the mortar element, two corpsman and two SEALs, ran to the battle. As the SEALs consolidated their perimeter and began administering first aid to the wounded, the PDF started firing again. The GFC ordered, "Use HE (high explosives)... Blow the shit out of that place!" All concerns for "minimal damage" had obviously been wisely abandoned. An AT-4 rocket was launched against Noriega's airplane. It entered the cabin just behind the cockpit, the explosion of the rocket rendering it a complete loss (see Figure 6 for photo of Noriega's plane). The SEALs then began to resume laying down massive amounts of fire power into the hangars.

PDF resistance ended at 0117, after only ten minutes from the initial assault. The GFC ordered a cease fire and began to assess the casualties. There was one confirmed dead from Bravo platoon, LTJG Connors, the officer who had pleaded to be added at the last minute, and one wounded. ENC McFaul and BM1 Tilghman from Golf platoon were dead and three other SEALs critically wounded. Five other SEALs from

Golf platoon were wounded, some still laying where they had fallen when hit.

A perimeter was reformed and a landing zone for the MEDEVAC helicopter was established. Three more SEALs discovered that they too had received wounds. In the adrenaline of the battle they did not realize they had received these wounds. GMG2 Burtch had taken a round through his right biceps. RM2 Plank suffered a wound to his left shoulder. QM2 Torganson took a round through his leg, but luckily it did not hit bone. At 0146, the GFC reported to TU-PAPA that Paitilla airfield was secure.

The reported PDF armored cars did not arrive. Apparently they had been instructed to go to Panama city and not Paitilla Airfield.

Figure 6. Manuel Noriega's shot-up jet. From United States Special Operations Command, "10th Anniversary History," 1997, p.26.

Inside the hangars five fortified PDF fighting positions were found. In the Aero Perlas hangar two positions were found. Inside the PDF hangar three fighting positions were found. Several large blood pools indicated that some PDF were hit. Although it will never be known for sure, most SEALs estimate that the opposition numbered about ten soldiers.

There were delays in finding a MEDEVAC helicopter because all were deployed in support of other missions. After a few minutes a UH-60 MEDEVAC helicopter was finally available. Extremely high air traffic delayed the control tower from granting the UH-60 clearance to take off. The MEDEVAC crew took off on their own initiative, being careful to look for other aircraft. Unfortunately they did not have the correct coordinates. Communications problems kept them from being able to talk to the SEALs on the ground. Interestingly enough, the SEALs had problems with communications with the MEDEVAC helicopter during the Navarre rehearsals as well. Luckily the helicopter crew spotted the strobe signal designating the SEALs' landing zone. They landed at 0205. A flight that should have taken ten minutes ended up taking 35 minutes. The wounded SEALs

were loaded on board and evacuated. TM2 Rodriguez, one of the wounded, later died at Wilford Hall in Panama.

The SEALs now returned to their perimeter positions to await the reinforcement force that they expected to arrive within the planned four to five hours. Throughout the rest of the day the SEALs waited. They busied themselves with patrolling the perimeter and carrying some of their equipment down to the beach for transfer to the waiting patrol boats. Night approached and still no relief force. At 2000 TU-PAPA passed word to the GFC that unexpected delays meant that the relief force would not arrive until the next day. Sporadic small arms fire occurred throughout the night possibly from looters or drug smugglers, but fortunately none of the SEALs were hit. Various reports of impending PDF attack kept the SEALs on alert around their perimeter. Finally at about 1400 the next day, five CH-47 helicopters landed at the airfield. A Ranger company disembarked to relieve the SEALs. The SEALs had lasted 37 hours instead of the anticipated five hours.

5. Execution Phase Analysis

Every one of McRaven's principles necessary for the successful conduct of special operations was violated on

this mission. Most of the principles were violated even before the mission began. The only principle that required examining during the execution phase was security. This principle was lost when H-Hour had to be moved because LTG Stiner had information indicating that the PDF had been alerted.

All but one of Vandenbroucke's problems were evident in this mission as well. Some of these problems such as coordination with the MEDEVAC had even been identified in rehearsals but not corrected. As for Vandenbroucke's problem of micromanagement from outside the theater, this mission being only one of many occurring at the same time, it was unlikely that that would happen. One might argue, however, that the last minute ROE change, in response to the State Department's concern over excessive battle damage, was in fact micromanagement of the sort described by Vandenbroucke.

Some reports say this mission was a success because the SEALs had in fact accomplished their mission of disabling Noriega's aircraft and securing the airfield. This success, however, was at the expense of four lives. Any mission that loses even one man, not to mention four, is a failure. The

real tragedy is that this was never a SEAL mission. SEALs are not a holding force. As McRaven would point out, special operations forces rely on speed and are not trained or equipped for long duration operations. Captain Sandoz and Commander McGrath should have known better. Both being SEALs, they should have known this was not a SEAL mission to begin with. Sixty plus men on open ground, while illuminated, running directly in to an enemy who is concealed and protected. That is not a good plan. Those men who went on this mission fought bravely. Those who lost their lives made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. A sacrifice that can never be repaid. Those men relied on their senior leaders to make experienced sound decisions. Four men lost their lives and eight more were seriously wounded because of their senior leaders making unforgivably stupid decisions. One source reports that Captain Sandoz was moved to a job in the Office of the Secretary of Defense where he can not hurt anyone.[17] Let us hope so, he and his cohort McGrath have done enough harm already.

[17] Walker, G., *At the Hurricane's Eye*, p.160, Ballantine Books, 1994.

D. IRAQ: OPERATION DESERT STORM[18]

1. Background

Iraq is a country that has endured a long history of many violent military rulers. No exception to this history is rule under present leader, Saddam Hussein. In 1979, Saddam Hussein was elected president. Hussein accused Baath Party leaders of plotting against his government. He conducted a high level purge that led to the execution of five members of the Revolutionary Command Council and dozens of other military officers. This was the beginning of Saddam Hussein's reign of dictatorial leadership.

The Israelis became concerned over Iraq's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. In 1981, Israeli jets bombed the Osarik nuclear reactor before it could be completed in a preemptive strike designed to set back Iraq's nuclear weapons program.

In late 1987, Iraq began a resettlement program to remove Kurds from their ancestral homelands. The Kurds resisted. In 1988, Saddam Hussein demonstrated to the Kurds that resistance was costly. At least 4,000 people died in

[18] Unless otherwise noted, information pertaining to this mission was drawn primarily from Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned from operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM.

Halbja after the government used poison gas and other weapons to suppress resistance.

On March 2, 1989 Amnesty International reported Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, Ethiopia, Burma and Iraq as users of death squad tactics. These tactics were responsible for official murder of unarrested suspects or dissidents by police or military teams or individuals. Iraq had the distinction of being the most flagrant violator.

On March 28, 1990 five people were arrested in Britain on charges of trying to smuggle nuclear triggering devices to Iraq. Forty of the devices were captured at Heathrow Airport. The devices had secretly been purchased in the United States, which began its own crackdown on Iraqi operations.

Saddam Hussein began verbally threatening his Arab neighbors. On July 17, 1990, Saddam Hussein condemned nations in the Persian Gulf that exceeded oil quotas. His country's own economic problems grew. Estimates are that they were facing a 40 percent inflation rate and a military budget of about $700 a year for every citizen in a country where the average annual income was only $1950. Hussein accused Kuwait of trying to cheat on oil production quotas.

He further accused several countries of conspiring with the United States to drive down the price of oil.

On July 18, 1990, Iraq's foreign minister claimed that there were Kuwaiti military posts on Iraqi territory and that Kuwait had stolen $2.4 billion in Iraqi oil. Following the speech, Kuwaiti armed forces were placed on alert. On July 23, Kuwait's foreign minister was labeled a U.S. agent by the Iraqi media. Kuwait sought to defuse the growing tensions by putting their forces on a 25 percent alert status. Iraq responded on July 24 by deploying thousands of troops along the border with Kuwait. Two days later Iraq demanded that Kuwait pay the $2.4 billion that they said was owed them.

Kuwait rejected Iraq's demands. Kuwait sought to appease Iraq by offering concessions such as loans and sharing of revenue derived from the Rumaylah oil field. It was learned later, through captured senior military leaders, that Iraq had already decided to invade Kuwait as early as July 17, 1990.

On August 1, 1990, talks between Iraq and Kuwait broke down. On August 2, Iraq, in a blitzkrieg, sent troops and tanks into Kuwait.

President Bush immediately condemned Iraq, stating that the invasion of Kuwait and potential Iraqi domination of Saudi Arabia through intimidation or invasion presented a real threat to U.S. national interests, requiring a decisive response. The United States immediately froze all Iraqi and Kuwaiti financial assets in the United States, and banned most trade. He also sent a carrier battle group to the Persian Gulf.

At the United nations, the Security council voted 14-0 to condemn Iraq and demand the immediate withdrawal of troops from Kuwait.

Iraqi troops began to mass along the Saudi Arabian border from what only days earlier had been the independent nation of Kuwait. The troops along the border appeared to be preparing for action.

On 4 August, President Bush was briefed by Commander in Chief Central (CINCCENT) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) on possible options. One option was to conduct air strikes against targets in Iraq. A second option was to implement Operations Plan 1002-90 (OPLAN 1002-90), Defense of the Arabian Peninsula. The President

decided that if Saudi Arabia invited the United States to take action, he would choose OPLAN 1002-90.

On 6 August, the Secretary of Defense and his military commanders visited King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The group expressed President Bush's pledge of support, and asked for permission to base U.S. troops, ships, and aircraft on Saudi territory. With Iraqi troops poised at his border, King Fahd invited the United States to send forces. The President immediately ordered DOD to begin deployments.

2. Preparatory Phase

The objectives as outlined by the President were:

1. Immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

2. Restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government.

3. Security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf.

4. Safety and protection of American citizens abroad.

As it became apparent that deterrence was not working, military action against Iraq was ordered.

United States Central Command's (USCENTCOM) OPORD 003-90, developed between August and November, stated the following SOF mission: USCENTCOM Special Operations Forces

will conduct special operations in Kuwait, Iraq, and Northern Saudi Arabia in support of all phases of the United States Commander in Chief Central Command (USCINCCENT), General Schwarzkopf's, campaign plan. This mission statement was applicable throughout Desert Shield/Storm. From this mission statement, Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) derived the following tasks:

1. Position SOF teams and liaison officers with forward deployed coalition units and conduct Foreign Internal Defense (FID) training as required.

2. Conduct Special Reconnaissance of Iraqi forces.

3. Be prepared to conduct Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) in Iraq and Kuwait.

General Schwarzkopf had definite ideas about the use of SOF. He felt SOF would not win the war, but could make a difference in the overall effort. He also thought that there was no mission worth taking undue risk for, and said to the Naval Special Warfare Commander, "Watch how you run the operation; if the seas are bad, don't risk your guys."[19]

[19] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM, p. 4-1.

Sharing Schwarzkopf's philosophy, the Commander Naval Special Warfare Task Group Central (CNSWTG-C), Captain Ray Smith, developed six criteria for NSW missions:

1. Any NSW mission had to make an impact on the CINC's objectives and fit into the CINC's warfighting strategy.

2. Each NSW mission had to have a high probability of success.

3. SEALs were not to be exposed to unnecessary risk.

4. NSW missions had to be primarily maritime in nature.

5. The SEALs approach or extraction had to be by sea.

6. Coalition warfare.

With the CNSWTG-C's objectives strictly adhered to, many missions were conducted by NSW forces. One such mission was the deception operation at Mina Saud. The operation was intended to deceive Iraq into thinking an amphibious assault was imminent. The idea for the mission evolved in a briefing by the CNSWTG-C to the Commander Marines Central (COMMARCENT) about NSW forces and capabilities. COMMARCENT wanted to divert the enemy's attention and forces from an anticipated USMC assault. The operation was well suited to traditional NSW skills.

CNSWTG-C had no problem obtaining CINCENT approval to carry out the mission.

The mission was given to Foxtrot Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Tom Dietz from SEAL Team FIVE. Prior to the tasking, his platoon had conducted four swimmer reconnaissance operations along the Kuwaiti coast. These operations were initiated about two weeks after the air strikes had began. The purpose of these operations was intelligence collection. The intention was to confirm what was already known about the area or to identify any differences in the information held. They were also to identify any beaches suitable for an amphibious landing.

Two beaches were identified as possible areas for amphibious operations. After further reconnaissance where swimmers actually went ashore, the beach just above Mina Saud was chosen. The figure on the next page shows where these operations took place.

Some three weeks into the air war Deitz was told that there probably wouldn't be an amphibious invasion, but to work up a deception plan. The mission was directed to begin three hours before the start of the ground offensive. The

Figure 7. Map of operational area. From Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM, Fig. 12-1.

actual time for the ground offensive was not disclosed to Deitz until the night of the deception operation.

When tasking was received, the entire platoon gathered to decide how to do it. A concept of operations was planned for tactical transport of SEALs and four Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRRC) by two High Speed Boats (HSBs) from Ras Al Mishab to an area about 10 miles out to sea from Mina Saud at 2000 hours on the night before the ground assault was to occur. They would launch their CRRCs and transit to an area 500 meters from the beach. Here, six SEALs would swim in with haversacks containing 20 pounds of C-4 explosives, connect them in series with detonation cord, and emplace them at the beach near the water line. The charges were to be initiated by time clocks. The charges were to be laid out to cover about 200-250 yards of beach. Also, orange marker buoys were to be placed in the water to give the appearance of lane markers for amphibious craft. After the charges and buoys were in place, the SEALs were to return to the CRRCs for rendezvous with the HSBs.

Just before the clocks initiated the charges, additional HSBs would fire on the beach and drop smaller C-4

charges over the side. All of this was intended to create the impression that major activity was about to occur.

The concept was approved up the chain but SOCCENT did not want the men on the beach. The plan was further modified to eliminate the series charge in favor of six separate charges.

The forces for the mission included Foxtrot Platoon, three CRRCs, and four HSBs. The platoon had photo intelligence dated in November and having only recently conducted reconnaissance of the beach, they had good HUMINT on the forces and layout of the area. In addition, the platoon had almost real time intelligence through the USMC Remotely Piloted Vehicle (RPV) detachment operating in the area. The USMC RPV operator ran the RPV along the coast where the operation was to take place. This allowed the platoon to observe on TV exactly what was there.

OPSEC for the mission was based on procedures that were part of the standard operating procedures at Ras Al Mishab, which was a Saudi base. These were:

1. Briefing rooms were located away from the Saudis.

2. The HSBs were berthed out of sight. Therefore, since the loud HSB engines could not be masked, the engines

were routinely run every night; whether there was an actual mission or not.

3. Team personnel did not "cammie-up" for a mission until they were at sea.

4. Weapons were only test fired at sea.

5. The HSB transit routes north were varied.

The mission required the full sweep of communications equipment: UHF, HF, and SATCOM. Each mode of communication had multiple back up radios. Before the mission, communications checks were conducted with helicopter, fixed wing and surface ships that would be operating in the area for possible support. Communications were also established with the CENTCOM Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center to assure good communications in the event the platoon needed close air support (CAS).

A rehearsal was conducted involving the CRRCs and placement of the haversacks. The previous reconnaissance operations conducted in the objective area made rehearsal with the HSBs unnecessary. The swimmers needed only dry suits, fins and the explosives to do the mission. But they planned on carrying twenty-five pounds worth of extra gear in case things went wrong. Three would carry suppressed

Heckler and Koch MP-5 machine guns to use if sentries patrolled the beach. Three others would carry CAR-15s with 203s attached for firing 40mm grenades into machine gun nests if necessary. Each had a pistol in case his primary weapon jammed, and a knife strapped to his leg in case he became entangled in underwater barbed wire. If things got really bad, they had 50 cal. machine guns, M-60 machine guns, and grenade launchers on the boats, and the ability to call for CAS.

In addition, the swimmers would carry small scuba bottles. The plan was that if enemy soldiers fired at them, the swimmers could use the scuba bottles to escape underwater. The bottles gave them three minutes of air, enough to swim far enough out to sea to be virtually undetectable by anyone on land. Each would have a red lens flashlight to signal if he became separated from the rest of the group, plus a backup strobe light and chemical light. Underneath their dry suits they would wear camouflaged fatigues in case they had to escape over land. In small waterproof backpacks they would carry dry jungle boots. They also would have an extra CRRC and two spare outboard motors in case of equipment failure.

3. Preparatory Phase Analysis

The preparatory phase of this mission seems to be well thought out and the mission plan appears to be thorough. Comparing this phase to Vandenbroucke's theory one can see that many, if not all, of his ideas are accounted for. The intelligence for this mission was exceptional. Not only did the assigned platoon have recent "eyes on," they also made excellent use of the Marine's RPV to gain real time intelligence. Fortunately for the platoon, the war environment allowed them to use the RPV to actually view the target area by television to get the latest intelligence possible. Also fortunate for the platoon, they were able to conduct their reconnaissance prior to this mission undetected, despite many close calls with the enemy. During these efforts they gathered detailed information on enemy patrols in the area, habits of the enemy and their exact location. This information would prove invaluable in conducting the mission.

Coordination with other forces was also considered and demonstrated in this phase. The use of the Marine RPV demonstrated that coordination was already successfully conducted in preparing for the mission. In addition, the

SEALs had specific plans to conduct CAS. They conducted communications checks and briefings with this support prior to the mission so that they could coordinate support if needed. The SEALs also established communications with additional forces in the area that were not a part of the main support plan, but could be called upon to assist if necessary.

Inadequate advice to decision makers does not seem to be evident so far either. In fact, the mission was conceived while the NSW Commander, Captain Smith, was briefing the Marine Commander on the capabilities of the SEALs. In addition, General Schwarzkopf was very familiar with SEAL operations because he had been involved in the Panama invasion years earlier. Schwarzkopf had witnessed both the capabilities and the limitations of special operations forces during Grenada and Panama. Schwarzkopf had made it clear that he would give the final approval on all special operations mission proposals. With General Schwarzkopf and Captain Smith working together, it seems unlikely that any decision makers were given faulty advice in regards to this mission.

General Schwarzkopf's advice to Smith to not risk his men presents a clear indication that this mission was not a victim of Vandenbroucke's wishful thinking. Indeed, the fact that Captain Smith established very clear criteria for assigning any mission to the SEALs, it demonstrated that these senior planners would not fall victim to wishful thinking. In addition, the plan conceived by the platoon shows that they too were not victims of wishful thinking. Even though they expected to be in and out, their plan was designed to cover any contingencies that they might encounter. They planned for communications backup. They conducted thorough radio checks with supporting forces and potential supporting forces. They had a wide assortment of fire power at their disposal from suppressed weapons to close air support. They had contingency plans for escape and evasion out to sea using the scuba bottles, and over land with dry clothes and boots. They had various link up plans with numerous redundancies in signaling devices. They planned to carry an extra boat and motor. They had two clocks for each demolition charge. In short, they appear to have planned for any contingency, even though if they conduct the mission properly, they should not even be seen

by the enemy. If anything, this mission seems to be planned with the exact opposite of wishful thinking in mind.

Each of the elements that Vandenbroucke cites as contributing to failure seem to be planned for in this mission. Vandenbroucke's last element of micro management during execution remains to be seen. In terms of Vandenbroucke's theory, however, this mission appears to have had an excellent chance for success. Of course the frictions of war can never be fully predicted, but the SEALs and senior leaders who planned and approved this mission seem to have done everything in their power to try to anticipate and control these frictions. Now let us see how this phase holds up under McRaven's theory.

McRaven's first element of simplicity is demonstrated in this phase. The mission is a classic SEAL mission with few complicated elements. The mission is very similar to the reconnaissance missions that had already been successfully conducted. The only difference is that they were now going to make some noise a safe distance from shore. Swim in, set charges, make noise, leave. Simple.

McRaven's concerns for OPSEC are also clearly demonstrated. Note the elaborate rules designed to ensure

mission security, such as running the boat engines, not putting on "cammie" paint until out to sea, and locating all briefing rooms in secure areas. Also, only enough information to plan the mission was provided to the platoon. They were not even told exactly when the ground war was to start until the last minute, even though this had no effect on their planning. This last bit of information only told them exactly when to activate the timers. Operational Security was clearly conducted, but did not interfere with the preparations for this mission.

Repetition was also demonstrated in this phase. Full dress rehearsals were conducted prior to this mission. Boat transit times were rehearsed to determine the exact speed they could expect to maintain with the weight of their equipment. All equipment that was going on the mission was used in the rehearsals to ensure familiarity. The same people who were going to swim in to the beach practiced swimming together and communicating with hand signals. All phases of this mission were rehearsed by the same people who would conduct this mission. The value of McRaven's element of repetition was obviously understood and rehearsed for in this mission.

McRaven's element of surprise was accounted for in the plan. The entire mission was to be conducted under the cover of darkness. No SEAL was to go ashore to possibly alert the enemy before the charges were in place.

McRaven's last two elements of speed and purpose were also accounted for. If one considers the target area to be the point where the swimmers reach the beach, then the entire time on target for this mission was to be no more than the time required to place the explosives and activate the timers. This time should take less than thirty minutes. The purpose was clear as well. Each SEAL knew and had rehearsed their part of the mission. They also knew that if they were successful, their efforts should deceive the enemy and divert their attention away from the ground war that was about to kick off.

This mission is the first mission to account for all elements of Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories during the preparatory phase. Also, of particular note is that even though the SEALs expected to encounter little if any enemy resistance, like the previous missions analyzed, they had planned for the worst case scenario. They have planned for and equipped themselves to be able to deal with a wide

array of contingencies, from those resulting from enemy contact to equipment failure. Note too, that they conducted thorough radio checks with all planned and unplanned support forces. Demonstrating none of Vandenbroucke's reasons for failure and all of McRaven's reasons for success, this mission should succeed.

4. Execution Phase

About sunset on 23 February, the four HSBs, each powered by two 1000 horse power engines, departed Ras Al Mishab with Foxtrot Platoon aboard. They had just been told that the ground war was to start at 0400. The seas were calm and the skies were slightly overcast. The CRRCs were carried uninflated and stowed in the bow of the HSBs. As the HSBs approached the launch CRRC point, the boats were inflated and outboard motors put in place. Three boats were launched ten miles offshore at around 2130. There were five men in each boat. Enroute to the swimmer insertion point, one engine was misfiring and required replacement. The engine was quickly replaced with a spare, and the SEALs were on their way in less than five minutes.

The air temperature was cold. Both the air and water temperature were in the low 50's. Explosions could be heard

in the distance and the beach was backlighted by an oil pipeline that had been blown up about a mile inland. The lighting made visibility better for the swimmers, but much more difficult for anyone on shore looking seaward.

As the CRRCs approached the beach, Night Vision Goggles and a thermal imager were used to surveil the coastline. The sky was filled with smoke from the burning oil and made for a particularly dark night.

At a point 500 meters offshore, six swimmers, including Deitz, slipped into the water and swam together toward the beach. When they reached about seven feet of water they spread out to 50 yard intervals and continued toward the beach individually. The distance between them was such that each could just barely make out the swimmer next to them, but they had rehearsed the movement and knew the timing.

The explosives were set in about 8-10 inches of water. Each charge had two timers. One timer served as a backup in case the first failed. There was no surf, so they did not need to be secured to the bottom. The charges were set to go off in two hours. Now all the SEALs had to do was activate the timers so that the charges would go off at exactly 1 A.M.

The pins were not pulled at exactly 11 P.M. Water temperature affected the clock mechanisms. Deitz had a table that he used to calculate the minutes lost or gained. For the 53 degree water that night, the timer would detonate thirteen minutes late. At 10:47, Deitz signaled his men to pull the pins activating the timers. The SEALs then retraced their routes, and swam together for a short distance out to sea. The charges were placed to time with the start of ebb tide. When detonation occurred the charges would be above water and the sound of the detonation would not be muffled by the water.

Deitz contacted the CRRCs by radio that the group was returning. "Foxtrot Two, stand by for signal," he whispered into his radio. He then used a directional red lens flashlight to signal for pick up. The red lens was used to signal out to sea and could not be seen on shore. "Roger, got your signal, came the reply."[20]

While the swimmers were completing their work, the SEALs in the CRRCs were positioning orange buoys to look like lane markers.

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[20] Waller, D.C., *The Commandos,* p. 393, Dell Publishing, 1994.

The swimmers were recovered at 2330 and began the return transit to the waiting HSBs. After rendezvousing with the HSBs, gear was stored and Dietz passed the codeword "Pamela" back to headquarters to let them know all was well. Two of the HSBs then idled in to about 300 yards off shore. At 0030 they began to fire into the beach with machine guns and grenade launchers. They also randomly threw five half-pound blocks of C-4 over the side to add to the show. About five minutes after the last half-pound block exploded, the charges on the beach detonated, exactly on time.

The HSBs then grouped together for the return transit to Ras Al Mishab. They arrived at 0230.

After a debriefing, the SEALs were put into isolation. Later that morning, Deitz received a cable from Smith. The cable read, "Tom: Please pass to your men an 'extremely well done' on last night's mission." the cable went on to explain that an intelligence report had confirmed that not only had the guns of the coastal defenders remained pointed toward the gulf, but elements of two Iraqi divisions reacted to the feint and moved east to Mina Saud.[21] The mission was a complete success.

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[21] Waller, D.C., *The Commandos*, p. 395, Dell Publishing, 1994.

5. Execution Phase Analysis

It is difficult to determine which of Vandenbroucke's or McRaven's theories can explain the success of this mission. All elements of each theory were planned for and executed. In terms of Vandenbroucke, senior leaders such as Schwarzkopf and Smith understood the value and limitations of the Naval Special Warfare forces working for them. Both of these decision makers were realists in the capabilities of these forces. Unique to this entire Gulf War operation were the criteria that were used to determine if a mission was right for Naval Special Warfare. This criteria effectively eliminated the chances for wishful thinking. As has already been shown, intelligence was excellent. Information to decision makers was accurate and realistic as well. NSW mission concepts, approved at SOCCENT, were personally briefed to General Schwarzkopf by COMSOCCENT or CNSWTG-C. There was no perceived lack of understanding at the CENTCOM level about the SOF-NSW role. Captain Smith made every effort to personally keep all senior leaders accurately informed on NSW missions and capabilities. Coordination and cooperation were excellent. In the lessons learned from this operation it states, "The willingness and

ability of operational units and individuals to cooperatively solve problems and provide mutual support was a significant factor in the success of NSW operations."[22]

This mission did not display Vandenbroucke's micromanagement during execution. Great thought went into any contingencies that might occur, and a lengthy execution checklist was created to keep senior leaders informed on the mission as it progressed. An execution checklist is a list of codewords that are passed via radio to headquarters. Each codeword represents a specific task or phase of the execution. Senior leaders knew what the platoon was doing each step of the way and had already approved what they would do if things went wrong. Micromanagement was not a temptation because the senior leaders had confidence in a well thought out plan that also kept them informed.

All of McRaven's elements for success were executed as well. Perhaps the most important contributing factor was that the mission was simple. One SEAL on the mission said the operation was boringly successful. This highlights the fact that NSW missions can be almost routine, but result in a big strategic payback. Keep in mind that despite this

[22] Naval Special Warfare Command Lessons Learned, Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM, p. 13-2.

simplicity, there was always the possibility that the enemy might see the SEALs if they had not planned or executed the mission properly.

McRaven's element of repetition in the form of rehearsals contributed to the speed and overall success as well. The SEALs went in undetected and quickly executed the purpose of the mission. The mission had one surprising moment when the engine of one of the boats malfunctioned, but the platoon had planned for such a contingency and calmly executed the plan of swapping the motor with a spare. It is difficult to say how this mission would have turned out had the enemy been contacted, but detailed plans had been thought out if such an incident happened. Communications checks had been conducted to help ensure such contingency plans were executable. It seems likely that the enemy would have had their hands full as they did throughout this war.

NSW forces completed over 270 combat missions and experienced no combat casualties during Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM. The deception operation at Mina Saud demonstrates that Special Operations forces can be used effectively and can make significant contribution to any

military operation. Although some might say that this operation was too easy, its significance is that it demonstrates that regardless of the simplicity of a mission, no detail should be forgotten. All contingencies within reasonable expectations must be planned for. Above all, never underestimate the enemy.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The three Navy Special Operations analyzed in this thesis offer many insights into the principles of special operations. The first two operations, URGENT FURY and JUST CAUSE were failures at many levels even though the mission objectives were eventually accomplished. The deception operation at Mina Saud during DESERT STORM was a complete success at all levels. Why the first two operations failed and why the last operation succeeded can at least in part be explained with the use of Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories. Important also is the clear development of these forces as they learned from their mistakes and found their niche in the overall reorganization of the U.S. defense establishment.

These operations were conducted over a span of about 8 years, and the performance of these forces both by senior planners and operators shows that past mistakes seem to have been understood and corrected. This is the key that must never be forgotten. It is unreasonable to think that even elite forces will not make mistakes. The frictions of war and Murphy's Law will always influence the outcome of any

operation. But mistakes must never be forgotten. The lessons learned from these mistakes must be institutionalized so that future generations of special operations forces do not make the same mistakes. Many times we learn in the wake of failure and forget the lessons we learned in the wake of success. The face of war is certain to change, but the fundamental principles learned from both success and failure will always have value in any operation.

As was first discussed in chapter one, both Vandenbroucke's and McRaven's theories offer a formula derived from failure and success. Vandenbroucke's elements of **faulty intelligence**, **poor cooperation and coordination**, **inadequate advice and information to decision makers**, **wishful thinking**, and **micromanagement** from outside the theater were all derived from operations considered to be failures. McRaven's elements of **simplicity**, **security**, **repetition**, **surprise**, **speed**, and **purpose** were derived from operations that were considered to be successful. Separately these theories do not fully explain the outcome of these missions, combined they do.

Vandenbrouke's element of faulty intelligence was a contributing factor in the failures of both URGENT FURY and

JUST CAUSE. Both of these operations lacked adequate intelligence. During the Grenada operation, the SEALs had very little information about the actual forces in the vicinity of the Governor General's house or even the specifics about the layout of the compound. This lack of information resulted in their having problems on their insertion and in being poorly prepared for the intensity of the enemy reaction.

In Panama, much the same can be said. The SEALs on this operation based their plan on intelligence reports that said that the enemy resistance would be minimal. These forces soon found themselves in an open area fighting an enemy that was determined to hold their ground. More accurate intelligence, especially regarding enemy capabilities, might have allowed for better planning. Both the Grenada and Panama operations suffered the consequences of poor intelligence.

Poor coordination was also a contributing factor in the Panama operation. In Panama, coordinated close air support was planned for, but suffered problems when the ground force was unable to communicate with the AC-130 gunship. This

operation also suffered from communications problems in coordinating MEDEVAC procedures.

The operations in Grenada and Panama also experienced problems with inadequate advice and information to decision makers. In both of these operations, the mission was that of securing and holding an area until being relieved by larger forces. These were not special operations. Senior decision makers, in each one, were misinformed on the capabilities and missions of these forces. Current thinking in regards to holding missions or airport seizures would assign a more appropriate force, such as the Rangers or Marines. These forces train for this type of mission and have the numbers and associated firepower such holding missions require. If the senior planners had been properly advised, then other more appropriate forces would have been assigned and these failures might not have happened.

Wishful thinking manifests itself in Grenada and Panama as well. In both of these cases, the preparatory phases reflected that both planners and decision makers were victims of wishful thinking. In both of these operations the actual enemy strength was never known for sure. The plans derived in light of this uncertainty erred on the side

of minimal resistance. In dealing with this unknown factor, clearly the senior planners and operators "wished away" the equally possible reality of stiff enemy resistance. In addition, problems discovered during rehearsals for Panama, such as the vulnerability of the SEALs to enemy fire, the difficulties in command and control of platoon movement, and MEDEVAC communications difficulties were simply wished away by senior SEAL leaders. Both of these missions suffered the grave consequences of wishful thinking.

Over control of mission execution by officials outside the theater of operations seems to have only been a problem during the Panama operation. When the ROE were changed at the last minute, the execution plan had to be changed as well. The ROE changed from "permissive force allowed" to "limiting collateral damage" to an absolute minimum. This last minute change in ROE affected the performance of the SEALs. Minimal damage seems to be appropriate if there is minimal enemy resistance, but not if men are fighting for their lives. Such concern for the enemy's airplane seems contradictory to a mission expecting heavy fighting. This change of ROE likely only reinforced the misconception and

wishful thinking that the enemy would just roll over at the mere sight of the SEALs. The results were devastating.

McRaven derived his theory from operations that he considered to be a success. His theory states that special operations forces are able to succeed if they have a simple plan, which is carefully concealed, realistically rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose. The Grenada and Panama operations had many violations in terms of these principles. The mission during Operation DESERT STORM violated none of these principles. It is interesting to see how these principles help to explain the different outcomes of these missions.

Perhaps the worst violation of the simplicity rule is the Panama operation. The plan started out simple, but continually increased in complexity as H-hour approached. SEALs train for operations that require only a platoon, 12-16 men, or less. The force structure originally considered for this operation required 2 platoons, or 24 men. By the time the mission was executed, the force structure had swelled to over sixty personnel. This increased the complexity of the plan and created command and control problems. These problems were expressed during rehearsals,

and continued to effect the mission throughout the execution as well.

Security was breached in both Grenada and Panama. During Grenada, the enemy knew that United States forces were about to attack and even broadcast a warning over the radio prior to the SEALs inserting. In Panama, LTG Stiner moved H-hour up because he felt that the enemy had been alerted prior to the invasion. In both cases the SEALs confronted an enemy that was ready and waiting.

McRaven's element of repetition was a consequence in both of the failed missions as well. These operations failed in part due to no rehearsals, as in the case of Grenada, or poor rehearsals, as in the case of Panama. In Grenada, the SEALs did not make the time to rehearse. Their performance showed the results when they forgot mission essential equipment on insertion. Proper rehearsals might also have revealed the need for close air support and other standard planning considerations that this plan lacked.

Rehearsals were conducted for the Panama operation, but their usefulness was greatly diminished when the actual forces that eventually conducted the mission did not participate in the rehearsals. In addition, the problems

that the rehearsals revealed, such as command and control and MEDEVAC procedures, were not properly addressed.

Surprise and speed were both a problem during Grenada and Panama as well. Surprise was lost during Grenada when a delay caused the SEALs to go in during daylight hours instead of night. They also lost the element of surprise when radio broadcasts announced to the enemy that the invasion was about to begin.

Surprise was lost on the Panama operation when the ground war started prior to the SEALs being in position. The SEALs then ran to their objective announcing their arrival with their noise and haste.

In regards to speed, both of these failed missions were planned to last for longer than the average thirty minutes that McRaven considers to be an operation that utilizes speed. Not only were these operations planned to last four hours, they ended up lasting 24 hours in the Grenada case, and 37 hours in the Panama case. Both clearly violate McRaven's element of speed.

McRaven's last element of purpose was also problematic in Grenada and Panama. During the Grenada operation, the forces assigned to execute specific missions changed several

times. This meant that the purpose for the involvement of specific forces constantly changed as well. The result was a severely condensed planning phase for the operation. This contributed to the poor plan that resulted.

The ROE change in the Panama operation, as discussed earlier, created uncertainty in the minds of the SEALS as to the purpose of the mission. This contributed to their disregard for stealth during mission execution.

The one mission that succeeded was the deception operation at Mina Saud during DESERT STORM. This operation displayed none of Vandenbroucke's reasons for failure and all of McRaven's elements for success. The key to understanding the overall success of this mission is understanding the success at all levels of this mission. The senior decision makers were well informed on the capabilities and limitations of the SEALs. Senior planners formulated specific criteria that were used to determine whether the SEALs were the force of choice for a mission. Intelligence at all levels was excellent. The potential for stiff enemy resistance was not wished away, but clearly planned for. Great detail in the planning by the operators accounted for all reasonable contingencies. Senior leaders

were familiar with the plan and were kept informed through the use of a detailed execution check list. These factors eliminated the temptation for senior leaders to interfere in the execution. Coordination was superb. Communications checks among all forces in the area were successfully conducted prior to the mission. The plan was simple, carefully concealed, well rehearsed, and executed with surprise, speed and purpose. As Vandenbroucke and McRaven would have predicted, this operation was a success for the senior decision makers and the men who planned and executed the mission.

From the analysis of these missions, both theories seem to provide a useful tool for thinking about the failure or success of special operations. They both provide broad elements for formulating a plan for success. The most important lessons to be learned from these missions seem to fall within the parameters established by these theories.

First, senior leaders must have a clear understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the forces under their influence. They must be provided with advice and information that is free of bias and full of facts. Special operations leaders must not allow themselves to fall victim

to the temptation of wanting a "piece of the pie" at the expense of the men conducting the operation. Naval Special Warfare must decide the parameters for missions that the SEALs are capable of conducting. They must train for and advertise these mission capabilities to theater CINCs.

Second, planners must consider all reasonable contingencies. Detailed plans must be formulated that not only accomplish the mission, but also provide a response if things go wrong. Planners must ensure that the level of detail is such that senior leaders and operators alike, have confidence that the mission will succeed. Finally, if there is any doubt as to the capabilities of the enemy, expect the worst.

Great strides have been demonstrated to this end. The formation of one Special Operations Command given the responsibility of training, equipping and coordinating one special operations force has been successful. The additional responsibility of educating the entire military on special operations has added to this success. The military, and most importantly the special operations community, must not forget the mistakes that led to this transformation.

We must learn from our past to plan for our future. We must continue to educate not only our forces, but the political leadership that controls them. As recent trends in Congress currently demonstrate, personal military experience is likely to diminish among future political leaders. These political leaders will increasingly look to military leaders for advice on military matters. It is incumbent upon the senior military leaders of today, and the future, to first ensure they understand their military, and then communicate that understanding to the political leaders.

The decision and planning that involves the use of military intervention must be based on careful analysis. The same can be said for the use of special operations forces. Special operations forces can provide utilities that far outweigh their numbers, if they are used properly. Special operations can succeed. Understanding special operations by decision makers and planners is the key to this success.

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